633 such modern problems as : increase in the number of hours of daily electricity; extension of city boundaries to include many scattered hamlets (e.g. of ethnic artisans) so as to be given to the rural "näch lebash" (thiefcatchers in white) with regard to the latest reawakening of an old family feud (däm mällässä) that threatens bloodshed; to increase municipal tax revenues; what to do about accompanying official visitors, nosy foreigners, visiting dignitaries, etc.; whether to abandon the insect-infested old prison or try to rebuild it; etc.

[43] Once or twice a year the emperor himself can be expected, with his retinue, requiring careful preparations and bringing much tension in advance to the urban officials. Sometimes he may address the people at large on the old "yähezb addäbabay", which must be marked out and cleared. If the town is also the provincial capital, the emperor can be expected to examine not only that office, but the heads of the sub-provinces, judges, elementary school, the provincial hospital; etc.

633 798 Religious tolerance, decreed by the emperor, now permits such ethnoreligious minorities as the Muslims to reside wherever they please. In the past they were restricted to a section of the town, usually the part between the floodplain and the big market. For example, in the old city of Gondar, this section, locally called 633 "Addis Aläm" (lit. New world) was assigned them. Despite its name, this is the oldest section, and was probably named so over a century ago because it was newer than

661 quarters by the hundreds, employing messengers to spy
642 out his daily movements and private life that might develop some entrance to him. They even do this when the job has already been given them by a lower officer, for the positive and negative reasons mentioned above. Court orders are usually unobtainable, even by such highly-placed officials as the modern-educated manager of the provincial branch of the State Bank of Ethiopia, without the personal intervention of the governor-general.

Both rural and urban administrations are considerably slowed by this pattern of appointments and decision making, but the old patterns of human relations, and values accompanying and often determining the social organization, can be expected to continue for some time in the future. In this case resistance to change seems complete.

D. The State and the Crown

643 The emperor, "Negusä Nägäst (lit. King of Kings, in the Geez language), used to be primus inter pares, one of several kings whom they had chosen as their superior, or whose military might left no doubt as to his supremacy. At present there is no "negus", and even the "ras" have lost their power together with their private armies. The monarchy thus reighs supreme, theoretically limited only by the voluntary Constitutions granted by

643 Emperor Haile Selassie I in 1931 and 1955.

His "Solomonic Dynasty" claims descent from the Biblical Queen of Sheba, known to Abyssinian tradition as "Makeda", or "Azeb", and her son, Menelik I. The proper reference to the emperor is "Atse", to the empress, "Itege" (lit. Master, Mistress, i.e., of the country), used before the name. If no name follows the designation, the title "jan" is used (possibly from the Geez "dayyana", he judges, or from the Cushitic "zehon", elephant, king of beasts). In address, the appelation used for the emperor is "Germawi hoy!" (Oh, Magnificence), formerly "Jan hoy!" (Oh, Elephant).

645 The Council of Elders, "chelot", referred to in village and town, also applies to the Crown Council of State. It consists, in addition to the emperor, of the Abuna, the archbishop of the State; those "ras" who have survived the centralization of recent years, notably the conservative kinsman of the emperor, Ras Kassa, and his liberal kinsman, Ras Imru; the powerful, reputedly chauvinistic, Minister of the Pen, Wolde Giyorgis; and several cabinet Ministers included more for decoration than expected contributions. Next to the emperor himself, this is the highest policy-making body at present, dominating, on important issues, the legislative, judicial and executive framework of the bicameral Parliament and cabinet. Serious problems discussed in the Crown Council have ranged from disaffection in high places, to the question of whether or not the old Geez-Amharic alphabet of 276 and more syllables should be simplified

212

631 565 dominant role in the rural administration. Most of the "awraja gäj" and "worāda" chiefs are from medium and lower provincial nobility. In Addis Ababa, the "Senate" 646 565 or Upper House of the Parliament instituted by Emperor Haile Selassie, is appointed from the higher nobility, the "Lākwonant", while the Deputies of the Lower House are selected, with imperial approval, from the lower country gentry, largely from the Amhara, Tigre, and Shoa areas.

643 631 178 565 Many special privileges of regional nobility have been abrogated by the present Emperor: The Wag Shum", hereditary ruler of the sub-province of Wag since the Zagwe dynasty of the 13th century, has been abrogated by him; also the "Behēr Nagash", the "King of the Sea", hereditary ruler of the Red Sea coast, was abrogated; also the Muslim Ethiopian dynasty of Jimma, which Menelik II had permitted to continue in accordance with the treaty of peaceful surrender (ostensibly because the present heir had joined the Italians).

The least changed position in the structure of administration is that of the cheqa shum, who forms its broad base.

4. Customary Law and Justice

671 The foremost characteristics of traditional Abyssinian law and justice seem to be that they are based on the power hierarchy of social structure; that they permit and even encourage considerable subjective inter-

695 The traditional oath, "May the ruler die" (If I lie), is still in full use. This oath is called "semanya". As mentioned above, perjury was once a very serious offense, even a capital one, later was penalized by substitution of "blood money", i.e. 80 Thalers fine. Until recently, provincial farmers still invoked the name of the head of their old provincial dynasty in this oath, the "ras", or the name of the long-dead Menelik II. Since 1941, however, the name of the present emperor is [643] universally used, "Haile Selassie yemut". It is in a very real sense a form of acknowledgement of the supreme power of the ruler, whose supreme power over and above the feudal system is regarded, traditionally, as a protection from chaos, lawlessness and uprisings that destroy and cause suffering. The proverb says:

[539] "When the emperor dies,
with whom will there be judging?".

The oath "Haile Selassie yemut" is used also to arrest lawbreakers, much as English police might arrest "in the name of the king".

672 Another old legal tradition still in full force is that of the "wäs", the personal guarantor. To obtain a loan or a job, the applicant must always present at least one reputable guarantor, who is then personally responsible for making up any default or damage or misbehavior, and who can even be jailed in case the culprit escapes. He acts as personal bondsman for a defendant, to avoid his being held for trial in jail. This "wäs"

694 dual's case, the "gubba" gift, continued, and it is often
[66] identical with a bribe. At the same time, the old cus-
178 tom which served as a last resort to a poor person to have his injustice rectified, by appearing with a heavy stone perched on the back of his neck almost crushing him, was abrogated because Europeans looked on this as primitive. The poor man thus has lost his few safeguards, and now is losing even the right to beg and to create a traffic hazard by throwing himself before the vehicle of
[71] the great man and shouting "abyet". (The practice of carrying the rock resembles that of innocently accused Arab Beduin who appear pressing a blade against their necks to demonstrate and shout their innocence.

178 Transition thus proceeds in unequal shifts, with
671 many culture lags. Modernization of law and justice
643 proceeds from the top, Addis Ababa, down the pyramid. One of the reasons for the circuit-riding of the emperor himself is to remind the chiefs of his realm of his all-seeing and all-hearing power, just as was done in the past. He acts as inspector-general.

The Emperor and his High Court in Addis Ababa stil give lip service to the Fetha Nägäst Code. But in practice, this amounts to little more than rationalization for the benefit of the ultra-conservative Amhara nobles.
693 The position of the "afä negus" (lit. Mouthpiece of the King), who traditionally was the guardian of theFatha Nägäst code, has now become honorary in practice. In the past he was the second-most powerful person in the realm, trusted partly because he was not of the ruling family

1: Messing E-5 (1953-1954)1957 MP5 Amhara MP5

779 the nation in Western patterns.

659 (1) The use of the church in promoting Amhara-

[721] dominated Ethiopian nationalism. This was recognized and promoted by Emperor Menelik II who had priests carry the "tabot" into newly conquered Galla, Sidamo and other pagan and semi-Muslim areas of his new empire, giving his

[564] military conquests the character of a crusade. Churches were built in these areas, guarded by troops of occupation, made permanent by feudal grants under which the local population, made "gabbar" serfs, was permitted to remain on the land as sharecroppers and peons of the feudal church.

This use of the church has been continued, though with reduced feudal emphasis, by the present emperor.

[212] The Geez alphabet of the church, modified in Amharic usage, is the only alphabet even non-Amharic-speakers may use, if they wish to write their languages, particularly in

[643] print. By taking on the name "Haile Selassye" (Power of the Trinity), upon coronation, the present emperor re-emphasized the power of the church. Finally, on November 4th 1955, when the new liberalized Constitution of 131 articles was proclaimed, it reaffirmed that the Ethiopian "Orthodox" Church, founded in the 4th century on the doctrines of St. Mark, is the established church of the state.

659 178 Phase (2), begun by the present emperor as his power increased, was a concurrent weakening of the temporal power of the church. At first this was gradual. In

178 With the gradual increase in their personal and military power, the imperial "change agents" have been able to introduce certain modern reforms. Their direct orders have been fulfilled in haste, as long as they supervised them personally. This was and is in accordance with the old concept of the government hierarchy, according to which the "great man" at the apex must be quickly obeyed as long as he is on the spot. The moment his attention is turned to some other matter, and he is not physically supervising the change, the status quo is largely resumed. In this connection Chapple and Coon's definition of equilibrium is apt:

> "Equilibrium is that state of a system...such that, when a small force is impressed upon it, a change takes place within it, and once this force is removed, the system returns to approximately its previous state."
>
> (Footnote 137)

Foreign educated students are largely descendants of the Amhara ruling nobility; although they have been motivated toward certain specific reforms, they fall back into their old noble-family patterns soon after their return.

178 643 In order to modernize the country, the Imperial "change agent" is faced with the task of establishing centralized control. For he is not only King of the Amhara, but "King of Kings" of all Ethiopia, a nation still far from homogeneous. Emperor Menelik II started to link the heterogeneous country through military conquest of the Galla and other ethnic entities, and, farsightedly, through the establishment of telegraph and telephone communication with at least his major provincial captials. Emperor Haile Selassie has continued this process, not only through direct orders and proclamations, but by means of the cultural Amharization of Ethiopia.

Footnote 137: Chapple & Coon: Principles of Anthropology, p. 704

1: Messing E-5 (1953-1954)1957 MP5 Amhara MP5

563 178 643 797 Wherever Emperor Menelik II conquered new areas, in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, he ordered the local people to build Abyssinian Coptic churches, and the Coptic priests who accompanied the troops with the sacred "tabot", consecrated the new local church and parish. These became centers of political and educational Amhara activities. Amharization was advanced not through large scale direct conversion of what was considered by the Amhara clergy a "lower" ethnic group, but through the establishment of a local, administrative, Amhara hierarchy, which the other ethnic peoples found it in their interest to emulate. They soon learned (particularly the old Galla nobility) that they could advance in the Amhara feudal-army system and regain feudal-land-tenure through loyal military service.

554 By assimilating to this Amhara pattern, young Galla of the old nobility or of the modern-educated élite have found that they can rise in the hierarchy, and, after conversion to the Coptic Abyssinian faith, even intermarry with the ruling class.

At the same time, ethnic particularism and tribal expression of the subject ethnic groups, including the large Galla population, 797 have been consistently discouraged by the ruling Amhara. Even foreign missionaries, who are still forbidden to convert Abyssinian Copts, but may work on Muslims, "pagans", etc, have been pressed into the work of Amharizing Ethiopia. For they must preach in the Amharic language, and can distribute Bibles only in the Amharic language, even in provinces where the vast majority still understands very little or no Amharic. If they break this law, missionairies can be promptly deported.

000 The present emperor, since his ascendency in 1917 and particu-

1: Messing E-5 (1953-1954)1957 MP5 Amhara MP5

178 The present emperor, since his ascendancy in 1917 and particularly since his return from exile in 1941, has proceeded to build [645] [643] a base for the modernization of his country through the creation of a modern-educated new elite. The only portfolio he holds personally in his own cabinet is that of Minister of Education (though the other ministers ask his guidance on even the most minute matters). It is this group which is beginning to bridge the gulf between the ethnic cleavages, and which is trying to enlarge Amhara loyalty to an Ethiopian nationalism. Its members give lip service to the still powerful Coptic church: they smoke publicly, but they will break the lenten fast only in secret, eat pork only when not in the public eye, and still refrain from walking arm-in-arm with a female in public. But when sent to the provinces to modernise the administration, they quietly make gradual but cumulative inroads against the temporal power of the church and against the feudal landowning gentry, on the basis of imperial proclamations and numerous directives. (Footnote 138)

643 178 779 This change is only in the initial stages. Some of the most fundamental decisions by the present emperor, notably the abolition of the "gabbar" (serf-like) system, and the measurement and registration of the land, have been most strongly resisted in the old-Amhara provinces, where these edicts have still not been enforced.

As a result, the emperor has often tried to proceed by indirect means. Just as he has utilised the foreign missionaries in his Amharization program, so has he tried to utilise the Abyssinian clergy in his modernization program. He has appointed an Egyptian Coptic clergyman-educator to head the new Theological College of

Footnote 138: For details see: Messing, Simon D.: Changing Ethiopia (in) The Middle East Journal, vol.9, no.4, Autumn 1955, pp. 413-432.

1: Messing E-5 (1953-1954)1957 MP5 Ambara MP5

643 178 779 Addis Ababa. He has repeatedly urged the Abyssinian clergy to take up the practice of preaching in church, on such subjects as reduction of the violent mourning for the dead and the ruinous "tazkar" memorial feasts; and admission of women into the church building. In Addis Ababa, a few modern-style churches have agreed to do this out of respect for his presence. But the provincial churches have retained their sacerdotal character and have not, except on occasions of brief imperial visits, adopted these innovations. The clergy has also resisted (by means of the "inertia" previously described) the urgings of the emperor to convert masses [779] of the "lower" ethnic groups to Coptic Abyssinian Christianity. Only sporadically have small-scale conversions taken place. The emperor seems to recognize the value of expanding the nominal State Religion, Coptic Abyssinian Christianity, to a real national church, as a pillar of national solidarity and national loyalty.

178 212 The new élite, small in number, but actively supporting the emperor's policies, and even occasionally beginning to become impatient with the circumspection and quiet, indirect, subtlety of Emperor Haile Selassie, has for some years raised the issue of the simplification of the Amhara alphabet. They had assumed that there would be much less opposition to such a worthwhile change than to big issues like abolition of the "gabbar" and changes in land tenure. The present alphabet, which consists of 259 syllables composed of 37 consonants and a minimum of 7 vowels, makes it difficult to teach writing to illiterate adults, children, and non-Amharic speakers, or to design typewriters. But the new, young, modern elite could not have been more mistaken in their optimism. The matter became a cause celebre, despite the fact that the proposal, published in 1948 in an Amharic booklet "Reform of the Alphabet",

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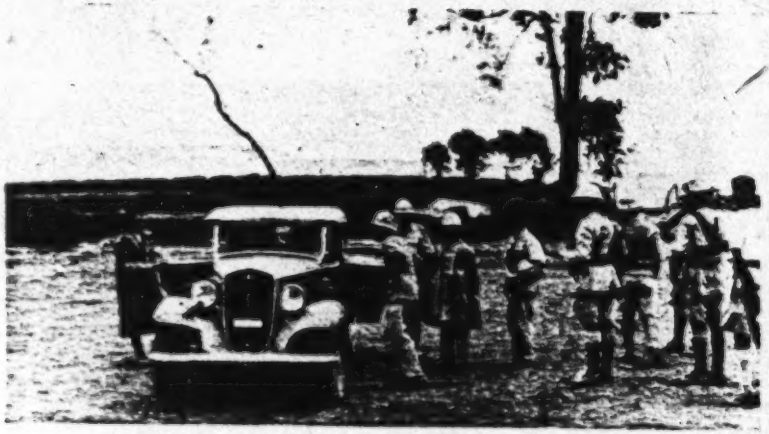

The Emperor and Colonel Wingate at Debra Markos, April 1941

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Household Cavalry

Patriots entering Debra Tabor, July 1941

[Facing p. 5]

2: Allen G-5 (1941) 1943 MP5 Amhara MP5

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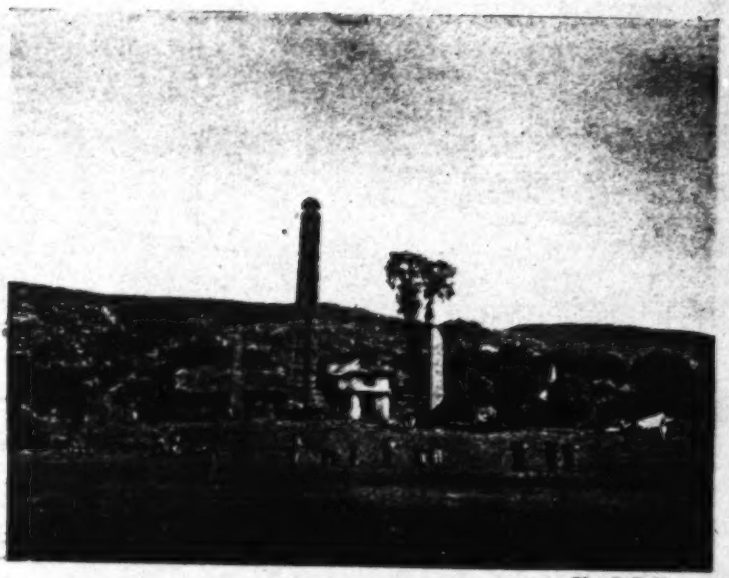

Phot. R. E. Cheesman

Aksum, monoliths

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Phot. R. E. Cheesman

Aksum, King's coronation throne and four pillars, Abunas' throne in background

(Facing p. 19)

4: Alvarez M-5 (1520-1526) 1881
MP5 Amhara MP5

136 this town of Barua, a man was lying asleep at night at the door of his enclosure, and his little son was with him, keeping his cows, and a lion came and killed this man without anyone perceiving it, and he ate his nose and opened his heart, without touching the child. The people of the country were greatly afraid, and said that he would remain with a taste for man's flesh,[1] and that no one would escape from him. The Lord was pleased that he never did any more harm. We used to go hunting at that time near this place, and we never found any lion, but we found ounces and tigers; we did them no harm, neither did they do us any.

CAP. XXIV.—*Of the lordship of the Barnagais, and of the lords and captains who are at his orders and commands, and of the dues which they pay.*

643 The lordship of the Barnagais is in this manner: its title
63 is that of King, because nagais means King, and bar means sea, so Barnagais means King of the Sea. When they give him the rulership they give it him with a crown of gold on his head, but it does not last longer than what the Prester John pleases. For in our time, which was a stay of six years, there were here four Barnagais, that is to say, when we arrived Dori was Barnagais; he died, and at his death the crown came to Bulla, his son, a youth of ten or twelve years of age, by order of the Prester John. When they crowned him he was at once summoned to court, and while he was at the court Prester John took away his sovereignty and gave it to a noble gentleman, who was named Arraz anubiata. This man held it two years, and they took from him this lordship and made him the greatest lord of the court, which is Betudete,[2] and the lordship of Barnagais was given to

[1] *Cevado*, literally, allured.

[2] The favourite or preferred, *Bitwaddad*, because he was liked.

4: Alvarez M-5 (1520-1526) 1881
MP5 Amhara MP5

another lord, who was named Adiby, who was now Barnagais. Beneath the Barnagais are some great lords whom they call Xuums, which means captains; and these are, first, Xuum Cire, a very great captaincy, he is now married to a sister of Prester John. We never went to this country and Xuumeta because it is distant and out of the way. There is another Xuumeta named Ceruil. We knew this lordship, and they say that its Xuum brings into the field fifteen thousand spearmen with shields and archers. Also Xuum Cama, and Buno Xuum, and Xuum bono. These Xumetas had been one, and on account of its being large, and the Prester having misgivings that they might set themselves up against the Barnagais, he made it into two, and even yet each of them is very large. They say that this lordship which is now two was the dominion of Queen Candace, without having been larger in her time. She was the first Christian that there was in this country, and whom the Lord called powerful. Also two other captaincies, one is named Dafilla, the other Canfila; these two border on Egypt, and their captains are like lords of the marches. All these captains before mentioned are of kettledrums, which nobody except great lords can carry: and all these serve with the Barnagais in wars when he goes to them, and wherever he may go. They have other great gentlemen under their command who are called Arraz,[1] which means heads. We knew one of these, who was named Arraz Aderaan, he is head over fifteen thousand men at arms, whom they name chavas. I saw this Arraz Aderaan twice at the court, both times I saw him before the gate of the Prester John going without a shirt, and from his waist downwards a very good silk cloth, and on his shoulders the skin of a lion, in his right hand a spear, and in his left hand a shield. I asked how it was so great a lord went about in that manner, they told me that the greatest honour

643 631 643 701 631 [534] [292] [411]

[1] *Ar-rus.*

4: Alvarez M-5 (1520-1526) 1881
MP5 Ambara MP5

643 he had, since he was Arraz of the Chaufas, that is, head or
701 captain of the men at arms, was to go about like a man at
631 arms. In the fashion that he went, there followed behind him twenty or thirty men with spears and bucklers, so that he goes about the court like a provost with his men. I knew another Arraz Tagale, and Arraz Jacob, lords of large lands, and many other Xuums, lords of lands, but without titles. Thus the Barnagais is the lord of many
643 lords, and of many lands and people, and so he and all
631 these lords that have been mentioned are subject to the
65 Prester John, and he removes and appoints them as he
439 pleases: so they pay to him large dues. As all these lords and their lordships are on the side of Egypt and Arabia, from whence come the good horses, and the brocades and the silks, they pay in these same goods: that is to say, horses, brocades, and other silks. They come to the Barnagais with all these dues, and the Barnagais to Prester John, and pays for himself and for the others, in each year, a hundred and fifty horses; as to the brocades and silks, it cannot be known how much they amount to, only I heard say that they were many; I also heard that they pay a large sum of cotton cloths from India for the customs which they levy in the port of Arquiquo.

CAP. XXV.—*Of their method of guarding their herds from wild beasts, and how there are two winters in this country: and of two churches that are in the town of Barua.*

[621] The settlement of this town of Barua and of those
231 adjoining it, is this. There are ten, twelve, or fifteen houses, and one walled and closed yard, served by a gate: in this yard they shut up their domestic cows which they use for their milk and butter, and also small flocks, and mules and asses. They keep the gate well fastened, and a great fire,

4: Alvarez M-5 (1520-1526) 1881
MP5 Amhara MP5

He said that no men died at the hands of justice, that they flogged many, and put out the eyes of some, and of others they cut off a foot or a hand, according to the quality the crime; but that he had seen a man burned because he was found to have committed two robberies in a church.

That the Pope or Patriarch of the country of Prester John is called Abima, which means father, and that there is nobody else in all the kingdoms and lordships of the Prester who confers orders except him.

The Prester John is called Acegue,[1] which means emperor, and he is called Neguz, which means king.

There is no manner of physic, only they apply fire; in some sickness they use cupping without fire, and for headaches, they bleed on the head with a knife placed on the vein, and they strike it with a stick so that it should draw blood, and also they take some herbs as a beverage to cure themselves.

In all the country there is no town which exceeds one thousand six hundred inhabitants, and of these there are few, and there are no walled towns or castles, but villages without number. The houses generally, or most of them, are round, and all of one story, covered with terraces or thatch, and courtyards round them. People generally sleep on ox-hides, others on beds made of straps of the same hides; no kind of table. They eat in flat trenchers, like trays of great width, without napkins or tablecloths. They have basins of very black earthenware like jet, and pipkins of the same clay for drinking water and wine. Many eat raw meat, and others eat it roasted on the ashes, others roasted over woodfire, and others over cowdung where there is no wood. There is much wax there, and tapers and candles; they do not make candles of tallow. There is no oil there except a kind which they call *hena*, and which is made from some herbs like Mayweed;[2] it has no taste, and is beautiful as gold. There

[1] *Alegue*, an Emperor.

[2] *Pampilhos*, also called *olho de boy*.

4: Alvarez M-5 (1520-1526) 1881
MP5 Amhara MP5

and so receive absolution. They pray in the churches of the canons as in those of the friars. Friars do not marry, canons and priests do so. When the canons live together in the circuit they eat in their houses, and the friars eat in community. The chiefs of these churches are called Licacanate. The wives of the canons have houses outside of the circuit, where they go to live with them: the son of a canon remains a canon, and the son of a priest not, except he chooses later to become one. No tithes are paid to any church, they live on the large properties which the churches and monasteries possess. Complaints against the clergy are dealt with before the secular justice.

The vestment is made like a shirt, and the stole with a hole in the middle, and put over the head; they have no maniple, nor amice, nor girdle; priests and friars all have their heads shaved, and the beards not. The friars say mass with their hats on their heads, and the priests with their heads bare.

In no church is more than one mass said, and no mass is said for alms, not even for the dead. When any person dies, the priests come with cross and holy water and incense, and recite certain prayers for him, and carry him off to burial very hurriedly: next day they bring offerings: the churchyards are all closed, so that nothing can enter them.

Prester John has no determined place of abode, he always goes about the country in tents, and he will always have in his camp five or six tents among good and common ones: and there will always be at Court of people for the horses and mules from fifty thousand upwards.

The kitchen of Prester John is a good crossbow shot behind his quarters, and they bring his food in this manner: all that he has to eat comes in porringers and dishes of very black earthenware on wooden trays, and pages bring them, and above the pages come a pallium of silk, which covers them so that these viands come with reverence.

4: Alvarez M-5 (1520-1526) 1881
MP5 Amhara MP5

643 735 There are many royal farms belonging to the Prester, in which a great quantity of bread is gathered, which is given to honourable persons, and the poor, and to poor monasteries and churches, without Prester John making any profit of the produce and revenue of these farms, but only alms.

241 In all the country there is much bread, wheat and barley; in other lands there is more millet than wheat or barley, in these, and where wheat and barley, there is much taff and dagusha (seeds not known to us), pulse, beans, pease, and all vegetables; and in other lands all sorts of grain and vegetables in great quantity and abundance. There are 312 many water springs, but no fountains made of stone. In the town of Aquaxumo, where the Queens Saba and Candacia were, there are many wells and tanks made with good masonry.

532 In the town of Aquaxumo there are images very well made, and figures of lions and dogs, and oxen, and other antiquities made of stone. In this town Queen Candacia became a Christian by the advice of her eunuch, whom St. Philip baptized by inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

491 [563] In all this country there is no bridge of stone or of wood; in no part of the kingdoms or lordships of Prester John are there Jews. There are infinite quantities of sugar canes, 137 and they do not know how to make it; grapes and peaches are ripe in the month of February and end in April: there are many oranges, lemons and citrons, and few pot herbs, because they do not plant them.

136 Animals, namely lions, ounces, tigers, wolves, deer, antas,[1] wild cows, foxes, lynxes,[2] wild boars, porcupines, civet cats, roedeer, gazelles, elephants, and other animals not known to us, of which the country is full, except two which I never saw there, namely bears and rabbits.

Birds, partridges of three kinds, like ours, other fowls

[1] *Anta* is a South American animal. [2] Probably hyænas.

7: Perham S-4 (no date)1948
MP5 Amhara MP5

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

THE NORTHERN PROVINCES: GENERAL

THE EMPEROR AND THE GOVERNOR

In the fifth chapter of this book some description was given of the character of the Ethiopian monarchy. This survey was made, as it were, from the throne. To complete the picture it is necessary to review the imperial power from the standpoint of the provinces. 643 ●

We have seen that the Emperor, however low his authority may have fallen in fact from time to time, was always recognized in theory as absolute, the King of Kings, the supreme leader of the army, the head of the church, and the disposer of all lands and offices. It is this last facet of the kingship that must now be examined: it should give further insight into the manner in which the rulers of Ethiopia were able to rise to the high eminence reserved for them by this conservative and religious people. It was the periodic assertion of the royal power under strong rulers which prevented the rise of anything approaching the powerful hereditary lordships of medieval Europe.

It is, indeed, remarkable that this should have been so. It was the primitive economy which in medieval Europe made it difficult for a king to accumulate and control the material resources required for the upkeep of a central army and a central bureaucracy. Yet, in Ethiopia, this condition was greatly aggravated by geography and was prolonged by her political isolation right into this century. This meant that, although the Ethiopian provincial rases were never able to establish for long their position as over-mighty subjects, the Emperors upon their side were unable to consolidate, century after century, the authority of the imperial government. The two elements remained in a permanent tension; the balance swayed from one decade to another, and through

7: Perham S-4 (no date)1948
MP5 Amhara MP5

643 the 600 years or more of which we have reliable knowledge, neither side until this century seems to have gained upon the other.

635 The crucial question was the appointment of the provincial governor. In theory his position was entirely dependent upon the Emperor. In all polities to which the word feudal can, in however general a sense, be applied, land tenure and land tribute were closely allied with the holding of office. It was the constant effort of the Emperors to insist both upon this connection and upon their right to grant and to withdraw both office and tenure. It is more convenient, however, so long as the complementary nature of the two is borne in mind, to deal first with the office of provincial governor and then with land-tenure and tribute.

Most European kings of the middle ages were obliged to recognize the right of great feudal nobles to the hereditary succession of large territorial lordships which were sometimes linked with high central offices and were, in practice, impossible to divide from great provincial powers. In Ethiopia, by contrast, few instances could be quoted in which provincial governors succeeded in passing on their positions and the lands which went with them for more than three or four generations. The most striking exception—one that goes far to prove the rule—was that of the ruler of Wag who, retaining in this conservative country something of the divinity which once had hedged his family, that of the original Zagwé dynasty which ousted the Solomonian line from its imperial authority, was allowed very special privileges. It is probable that with most ruling families, the laxity with regard to marital relations and legitimate succession, which, as we saw, obscured the imperial genealogy, was a deterrent to the building up of strong lineages.

The keynote is struck in one of the earliest examples, that given by Alvarez, of the great office of *Bahr-nagash*, ('king of the sea', i.e. the northern marches province near the coast). 'For in our time, which was a stay of six years', he writes, 'there were here four *Barnagais*, that is to say, when we arrived Dori was *Barnagais*; he died, and at his death the crown came to Bulla, his son, a youth of ten to twelve years of age, by order of the Prester John.[1] When they crowned him he was at once summoned to court, and while he was at the Court Prester John took away his sovereignty and gave it to a noble gentleman. . . . This man held it two years, and they took from him his lordship and made him the greatest lord of the Court . . . and the lordship of *Barnagais* was given to another lord. . . .'[2] And again, 'The Prester John deposes them and appoints them whenever he pleases, with or without cause. . . . I saw great lords turned out of their lordships, and others put into them,

[1] I.e. the Emperor. [2] Alvarez, pp. 52–3.

7: Perham S-4 (no date)1948
MP5 Amhara MP5

Gojjam when its king, Takla Haimanot, died in 1901. He wished to break up this large kingdom, but he did so only partially, leaving the eastern part to the son of the dead king. He also made it a habit to keep powerful chiefs waiting about at court, a favourite method of French kings and one that Theodore had applied to him in his own youth. The *Wag-Shum* was again deprived of his ancient hereditary succession by the Empress Taitu, in favour of her own nominee; but the *Shum* was later restored. As Menelik's physical power declined, so did his control until, during his last years, the provincial governors again became largely independent. Imperial authority over the governors declined still further under the unstable Lij Yasu, and was only very gradually restored in a new form by Haile Selassié.

We have seen that even the present Emperor had to pay some attention to the hereditary position of great families in those northern regions which had a traditional jealousy of Shoa and in which opposition and rebellion were most likely to appear. In his early days as Regent the provincial governors still remained very independent. Ras Hailu, for instance, did not come near the capital for years. Provincial tribute was very low. Chiefs were allowed to rule the country with which their family had been associated until some misdeed or act of disloyalty brought deposition. Hence Haile Selassié confirmed Ras Hailu in his father's position in Gojjam, and punished his contumacy with disinheritance and imprisonment only later when he was strong enough for this action. Similarly he felt obliged to confirm Ras Seyum in his ancestral lordship of Tigré. It was the decision to grant Ras Seyum, at the expense of his cousin *Dejazmach* Haile Selassié Gugsa, the lion's share of the family lands, which threw the latter into the arms of the Italians in 1935. Ras Gugsa Wallié's position in the provinces of Lasta and Bagemdir was based upon family connections, and when he was killed during his rebellion in 1930 the substitution of Ras Kassa was appropriate because of his connection with the former rulers of Lasta through his mother. Ras Kassa's son was made governor of Bagemdir in 1942 in recognition, presumably, of the family connection.

The present Emperor himself might be given as the representative of a branch of the royal line which has held the great province of Harar since his father Ras Makonnen conquered it and was confirmed in its lordship by his cousin Menelik. The lands and governorship of this province were inherited by Makonnen's eldest son and, upon his death, went to the younger brother, Tafari. Though Lij Yasu, when he came of age, transferred this potential rival to a south-west province, Tafari had left behind him in Harar an army that was loyal to his house, and when the clash came it rallied to him and Lij Yasu lost his throne.

7: Perham S-4 (no date)1948
MP5 Amhara MP5

THE GOVERNMENT OF ETHIOPIA

[643] Harar is now ruled over by the Emperor's second son. While it is clearly difficult to deduce constitutional rules from conflicts at this level, turning our glance to a lower one we may note that in addition to the few examples of continuity, many others could be given of frequent changes of governorship, even in the north, by both Menelik[1] and Haile Selassié. These would illustrate their ability to act upon these rights in this way, at those times in their reigns when they were strong enough to do so.

It is interesting to consider more closely the exact position as to the distribution of governorships on the eve of the Italian invasion. For convenience the south, which must be discussed in somewhat more detail later, has for this purpose been included with the north. According to an authoritative Italian writer, the number of provinces was thirty-two; of these, six might be regarded as being headed by governors of local hereditary status. They were Wag, Tigré (divided between two local notables), Wallaga, the small region of Beni-Shangul under local Muslim governors, and Salale under Ras Kassa. Eastern and southern Shoa was a royal dominion; Wallo, Harar, and Ogaden were also personal fiefs of the Emperor governed by his sons. The remaining twenty-one provinces were all under the Emperor's men, governors appointed by him from among his closest relatives and supporters, including a few of the 'new' younger and more progressive officials.[2] This analysis would suggest that, by the end of the first part of his reign, Haile Selassié, as far as appointments of governors were concerned, had succeeded in controlling very directly some two-thirds of the country.

631 Mr. de Halpert, however, in information supplied to the writer, is critical of these categories as being too exact. He points out that in the 635 Ethiopia of 1935 it was almost impossible to say which division was a province and which a district. Tigré, Shoa, and Gojjam, as ancient kingdoms, were really subdivided into a number of administrative districts. He would also dispute the exact significance of some of the appointments. Without discussing these points in further detail, it may at least be assumed that the provinces and districts could be roughly divided into those that were more and those that were less closely under imperial control and that the former were the more numerous and were upon the increase.

THE OFFICE OF GOVERNOR

635 The governor then, according to theory, was appointed and dismissed

[1] Guèbrè Sellassié, vol. 2, p. 487.

[2] Zoli, 'L'Impero Italiano dell'Africa Orientale', *Bollettino della R. Societa Geografica Italiana*, series VII, vol. I, no. 8, pp. 473–84.

7: Perham S-4 (no date)1948
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651 ordinate officials which varied from province to province. There were also the heavy dues of purveyance to passing officials, soldiers and even private travellers, whose records are full of evidence of the readiness with which through the centuries this burdensome obligation was accepted. Some of these dues were not easily to be distinguished from the further requirements in kind and in labour which a tenant might owe, in addition, as rent to a private landlord.

THE EMPEROR AND THE LAND

423 From the *gabar*, who formed the basis of the system of land tenure, we return to the Emperor at its apex. The conflict as to whether provincial office was held personally and terminally at the royal will was reproduced in the closely complementary question of the usage and ownership of land and its dues by which alone office could be supported. Here, in theory as well as in practice, the Emperor was less successful in maintaining his claims. It was true that land and office generally went together, but land-holding was wider than office-holding; it was more complex and it affected more people. Moreover, while office was highly desirable, the earth, meeting all necessities, was the main object and, once acquired, was held with the utmost tenacity.

423 643 The theory maintained by the Emperors was that they owned all the land in the country and that it was therefore all held at their will. 'He takes and gives all lands at pleasure' we read in Tellez.[1] 'The King's authority is so unlimited', wrote Lobo, 'that no Man can in this country be called with Justice Proprietor of anything, nor doth any Man when he Sows his Field know that he shall Reap it.'[2] Numerous authorities follow these early observers in this view. The assumption was that no land could be private property and therefore heritable. The most authoritative challenge to this theory was to be found in the ancient *Fetha Nagast* itself: in this, private property was formally recognized.[3] Turning to the latest age we find that a clause (article 27) of the constitution of 1931 runs as follows: 'Except in cases of public utility determined by law, no-one shall be entitled to deprive an Ethiopian subject of the movable or landed property which he holds.' Between these dates stretches the long struggle of the crown to counter these rights and to retain control over the lands granted out on various terms to the several categories of subjects.

[1] Tellez, p. 53.

[2] Lobo, J., *A Voyage to Abyssinia* (translated by Mr. Le Grand), 1735, p. 263.

[3] Guidi, p. 361. Quoted by M. de Coppet in Guèbrè Sellassié, vol. 2, p. 611.

7: Perham S-4 (no date)1948
MP5 Amhara MP5

THE NORTHERN PROVINCES: LAND TENURE

According to one legend, when Menelik I returned from his visit to his father Solomon, he divided the land into three parts, one for the crown, one for the church and the other for the laity. Certainly, as regards the first part of the division, the Emperors retained vast estates as the royal domain. These tended to be most numerous in the region of the imperial headquarters and became less so towards the periphery of the country. We saw in the chapter upon public finance that the estates from which it was possible to supply the royal household with grain, honey, *tej*, etc., were known as *mad-bet*. These estates included also wide pastoral areas which carried the royal herds. There were numerous large estates scattered about the country which the Emperor had granted to members of his own family and so long as these remained closely bound to him they were, politically, as useful as his personal domain.

From his royal domains the Emperor took all the produce that could be delivered to him. With the conquest of the southern lands and the arrival of the railway he was able to grow and to sell coffee. Outside his domains, in spite of his frequent claims, the Emperor was only able to make effective claim to waste, lapsed, conquered, and confiscated lands. Sometimes individuals or groups, holding private heritable land, would ask the Emperor to take it over as royal land in order to protect themselves from the rapacity of some local lord or the claims of some other group. In Dembea the people did this because the Emperor was allotting so much of their land to the churches against their will and they felt that if it was royal land he would not be so generous with it.[1] An unsuccessful rebellion would give an excellent opportunity for him to regain some of his lost land by means of confiscation. What he resumed with one hand he was always giving away with the other into what was in fact, if not in theory, private ownership. He still retained over this, of course, his rights to taxation. This consisted, as we have seen, in the tithe, a tenth of the produce, which was generally confined to grain, and to a land-tax which varied in amount and character from time to time and from place to place. He also reserved the right to make special levies.

Within the vast terminology referring to Ethiopian land tenure there are two terms which must be defined and kept before the reader. The one is *rest*, which means hereditary ownership, and the other is *gult* which describes land in which the Emperor had granted away some or all of his rights to tribute. (There is a conflict of authorities as to whether the Emperor had ever granted away his tithe as well as his tax upon *gult* land.) Clearly either of these kinds of tenure was very desirable;

[1] Rossini, pp. 104–5.

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5
Ethiopia MP1
Tigre MN9

related to Ge'ez, the ancient and liturgical language of Ethiopia, much as Italian is related to Latin.[1] It was in Tigre country that, during the first seven centuries A.D., the kingdom of Aksum reached heights of civilization never again attained in Ethiopia's history. Because of the antiquity of their region and the glory of their past, the Tigre are to some extent the cultural aristocrats of Ethiopia.

The Amhara inhabit vast areas of what are today the provinces of Bagemder, Gojjam, Wallo, and Shoa. Their language, Amharic, is the official language of Ethiopia.* Since the beginning of what is called the restored Solomonid Dynasty (1270), all but one of the emperors of Ethiopia have been Amhara.† The exception was a Tigre, Emperor Yohännes IV (1872–89), though he sojourned for many years at Debra Tabor in Amhara country, and Amharic was commonly spoken at his court.

The differences between Amhara and Tigre culture have not yet been studied systematically. Even so, one can say that their differences are not nearly so great as what the two groups have in common. Language forms the chief difference. Like Ge'ez and Tigrinya, Amharic is a Semitic language, ultimately descended from old South Arabic, but Amharic has been molded to a greater degree by indigenous Cushitic tongues. Other differences relate to minor variations in custom, greater communal orientation in some Tigre areas, and differences in temperament. But the two groups share the legacy of Aksum, the Ethiopic alphabet, Ge'ez literature, Monophysite Christianity, similar political and social institutions, and the same style of life. One would be justified in treating their traditional Abyssinian culture as a unity, as virtually all authors have done in the past.

In this book, however, I have chosen to focus on Amhara culture as the dominant tradition in Ethiopia. This has been done, first of all, because of my limited competence to deal with Tigre materials, since I am neither familiar with Tigrinya nor fortunate enough to have done field work in Tigre areas. But a less fortuitous reason is that any serious account of contemporary Ethiopia must begin with the fact of Amhara dominance. With respect to numbers, true, the Amhara are in a minority: Amhara probably comprise no more than one-quarter of Ethiopia's total population (now estimated at around twenty-two million). Their dominance is to be measured, rather, in political and cultural terms. On the political side it is manifest in the perpetuation of the Amhara monarchy and the preponderance of Amhara in top political offices. On the cultural side it appears in the spread of Amhara customs throughout the empire by officials, soldiers, settlers, and teachers, and in

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* English is the second official language.

† A number of Amhara emperors since the mid-eighteenth century were partly of Galla stock, however.

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

times brought dissension to the state, the legitimate Crown was triumphant most of the time. 175*

In the history of Ethiopian literature the period has been called a Golden Age.[1] The important works composed during this time include *The Glory of Kings*, which contains the story of the Queen of Sheba, Solomon, and their offspring, Menelik I, legendary first king of Ethiopia; *The Book of the Mysteries of Heaven and Earth*, a compilation of occult theology and numerology, with a Miltonic account of the struggle between Michael and Satan; *The Christian Romance of Alexander the Great*, a fantastic portrayal of Alexander as a Christian hero who traverses the Land of Darkness and the miraculous Land of the Living; the moralizing tracts of the greatest emperor of the period, Zar'a Yā'qob; as well as numerous lives of saints and translations of Christian writings from Arabic. 175* 538

Connoisseurs of Ethiopian art attribute the most original and refined paintings to the latter part of this period. Using translucent colors and austere shapes and design, Ethiopian monks brought to expression an intense spirituality in the form of miniatures in illuminated manuscripts.[2] 175* 532

At the same time this was the Heroic Age of Ethiopian warfare. Amda Tseyon vanquished sixteen Muslim chiefs to the south and west; the valor of Sayfa Ar'ed was celebrated in medieval Arab tales of chivalry; Dāwit I pushed his victories against the Muslims as far as Zeila on the Gulf of Aden. Improved military equipment and organization under Yeshāq brought the imperial forces to a new level of discipline and power, which Yeshāq used to establish his authority in many southern areas. Zar'a Yā'qob, famous for endowing churches and monasteries and for encouraging literature and art, was a successful warrior in his own right. 175* 648

A close-up of Ethiopia at the height of its medieval synthesis is provided by Father Francisco Alvares, Portuguese emissary to Abyssinia during the years 1520–27.[3] We see a prosperous kingdom, its far-flung dominions headed by hereditary rulers and royal appointees, all of whom pay tribute in kind to the emperor. The tribute consists of horses and mules, blankets and cloths, silk stuffs and gold, all in impressive amounts. The provincial heads, and the armies they must make available, live off the land they govern. The numerous priests and monks are supported by lands granted them by the king. Justice is administered at three levels, with the possibility of appeal from the local judge, to the provincial governor, to the royal court itself. The king's mobile camp, large as a town, is his capital, so that he spends his years marching about from one corner of his domain to another. 175* 64 631 [651] [69]

The monarch at the time of Alvares' visit was Lebna Dengel (1508–40), a man of pride and temper. He refused to heed counsel that the kingdom was imperiled by threats from the outside. Indeed, legend has it that he was discontented with the prevailing civil harmony and begged God to send an ad- 175* 643

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

#175 643 versary, so that his people might be roused from their peacetime habits and the nation could have a chance to prove its might. Ethiopia never fully recovered from the shock that came in the middle of his reign.

#175 648 *Shock*

Amhara-Tigre society was convulsed by one disaster after another during the succeeding century. In 1527 began a series of conflicts with the Muslim kingdom of Adal led by a fearful warrior, Imam Ahmad ibn Ibrahim al-Ghazi, surnamed Grāñ. Equipped with firearms from the Ottoman Turks and hordes of Somali soldiers, Ahmad Grāñ proceeded to overrun Ethiopia, causing destruction and massacre wherever he tread. Only after most of the country had been laid waste, its inhabitants forced to embrace Islam, its churches looted and burned, was Ahmad Grāñ at last killed. His troops were routed by an Ethiopian force that had been revived by the expedition of Portuguese match-lockmen under Christopher da Gama.

The wars with Ahmad Grāñ left the country impoverished and disorganized. In this state it lay vulnerable to another shock: the massive tribal movements of the Galla from the south. The Galla advanced through periodic invasions of their warrior age groups. Coming first in furtive raids, then concerted warfare, finally by slow migration, these hardy nomads managed to penetrate deeply into Amhara lands. By 1563 the Galla had invaded over a third of the empire.

Ethiopia was further shaken in 1557 when the Ottoman Turks occupied the port of Massawa. This action introduced a problem that was to harass Ethiopia intermittently until the present: the danger of occupation by European powers. The Ethiopians were able to repulse the Turkish invader as he pushed farther inland, but Massawa remained in foreign hands until 1941.

#175 648 799 643 In seeking to recover from the destruction wrought by Grāñ's holy war, a number of emperors turned to European Christian powers for religious support as well as for political and technical assistance. Some of them became converts to Catholicism and, encouraged by Portuguese Jesuit missionaries, attempted to promote the new faith among their subjects. The outcome was only further bloodshed. Emperor Za Dengel's conversion in 1603 aroused civil strife and led to his downfall at the hands of nobles who did not share his Catholic sympathies. More serious trouble appeared during the reign of Susneyos (1607–32). He, too, adopted the Roman faith, and allowed one of the more impetuous Jesuits, Alphonzo Mendez, to direct a number of reforms in the Ethiopian Church. Mendez insisted that all priests be reordained by himself, that the population be rebaptized, and that the liturgy be rewritten. He forbade circumcision, and defined the previously unknown crime of witchcraft. Such measures antagonized the populace and provoked "horrid uproars, bloody wars, and the slaughter of many great Personages," as Lu-

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

dolphus put it.[4] At length, unable to witness the further decimation of his people because of religious controversies, Susneyos abdicated in favor of his son Fāsil. Fāsil lost little time in deporting the Jesuits and restoring the Orthodox status quo.

Recovery

In the wake of all these collisions, Ethiopia made two valiant attempts to regain equilibrium and glory: through the splendor of Gondar in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, and through the force of three emperors of the nineteenth century—Tĕwodros II, Yohānnes IV of Tigre, and Menelik II of Shoa.

Gondar was founded as a new and stationary capital by Fāsil. It served as imperial headquarters for many generations. Later, the kingdom of Tigre knew a resurgence of power that led to control of the empire under Yohānnes (1872–89). His castle at Makalle symbolized one last rally for the north—after an interregnum of a thousand years—before being eclipsed by the Shoan throne.

The shock which began with the invasions of Ahmad Grañ shattered Ethiopia's medieval synthesis once and for all. The political consequence of those disruptions was an increase in provincialism, reaching its climax in the famous "Age of the Princes" (1755–1855) when each province had its own sovereign and for all practical purposes was a polity unto itself. The Solomonic line, the matrix of Ethiopian political unity, was splintered in several directions, leaving contenders in each of the provinces. Though the official imperial line remained at Gondar, Tigre was able to reassert its ancient claims and Gojjam recurrently voiced its separatism, and what may be called the "House of Manz" came to compete with Gondar as a center of national consciousness.

This political division was accompanied by a peculiar cultural bifurcation. Elements of the national culture that had been rather evenly distributed before Ahmad Grāñ now became relatively specialized in Gondar and Manz. The recovery of Ethiopia produced a geographical division of manners and morals as well as several lines of Solomonic royalty.

HISTORICAL PROFILES

The Role of Gondar

Gondar is the only city in Ethiopia with charm and character expressive of Amhara culture. Even today, despite modern accretions, the remnants of its castles, walls, bridges, and sanctuaries transmit a stately calm, redolent of past nobility and African grandeur.

The town is situated on a flat volcanic ridge at seven thousand feet above

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

*175 sea level. It is surrounded by three rings of high mountains, which afforded
361 military protection in times past and today provide handsome scenery. Only toward the south is a direct land route alluring, as the ridge descends toward the fertile plains of Dambiyā and the waters of Ṭānā, largest lake in Ethiopia.

[132] Because of its intermediate altitude, Gondar escapes the chill of higher re-
[312] gions and the intense sun of the lowlands: its climate is among the most pleasant in Ethiopia. Water is supplied by two streams—the Angarab and the
[132] Qīha—which enclose the town, then flow together down to Lake Ṭānā
[241] twenty-one miles away. Adequate rains throughout the year assure two, some-

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• 643 TABLE 1

THE HOUSES OF GONDAR AND MANZ

Gondarine Emperors Who Ruled with Full Power		The Line of Independent Shoan Rulers		
Name	Dates of Reign	Name	Highest Rank Attained	Dates of Reign
Fāsil (Fāsiladas)	1632–67	Nagāsi (Nagāsē Kristos)	Abēto	1697–1703
Yohānnes I (the Pious)	1667–82	Sebastē (Sebastyānos)	Marīdāzmātch	1705–20
Iyāsu I (the Great)	1682–1706	Abbtyē	Marīdāzmātch	1720–45
Takla Hāymānot I	1706–8	Amhāyas (Amhā Iyasus)	Marīdāzmātch	1745–75
Tēwofilos	1708–11	Asfā Wassan	Marīdāzmātch	1775–1808
Yostos	1711–16	Wassan Sagad	Rās	1808–13
Dāwit III (the Singer)	1716–21	Sāhla Selassie	Negus	1813–47
Bakāffā (the Inexorable)	1721–30	Haile Malakot	Negus	1847–55
Iyāsu II (the Little)	1730–55	Menelik II		
		As ruler of Shoa	Negus	1865–89
		As emperor of Ethiopia	Negusa Nagast	1889–1913

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[132] times three, crops in the hinterland. Ṭēff and other grains, oilseed, honey, and
[241] livestock are produced in abundance.

[231] The population of Gondar approached seventy thousand during the city's
*175 time of power.[8] Thereafter it declined to but a few thousands. The towns-
633 people of Gondar have been chiefly traders, priests, scribes, soldiers, artisans,
[162] and drink-house proprietresses. Like the inhabitants of Aksum, they are more
[463] conscious of Ethiopian history than people elsewhere in the country, as well they might be.

Gondar was founded by Emperor Fāsil about 1635. Legend says that he
[193] was inspired to plant his capital there because of a prophecy that Ethiopia would attain its greatest power if its capital were established in a place whose
[361] name began with the syllable *Go*. More practical considerations were surely

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

[GONDAR]

the proximity to water, the protective rings of mountains, and the healthy distance from Galla tribes. 175* 633 361

When Fāsil arrived at Gondar, then no more than an insignificant village, he pitched his tent near a large sycamore. This magnificent tree, one of the landmarks of Gondar, became the site of popular celebrations on holidays. Not far from this tree Fāsil decided to construct his castle, the largest and best preserved of the castles of Gondar. Thus began an ambitious program of building, which included the construction of seven churches, a number of bridges over the streams around Gondar, and a large bath, next to which Fāsil placed a three-story pavilion. In the course of the following century Fāsil's successors added many more buildings, including a total of twenty-one additional churches. Of the secular buildings, the castles of Bakāffā and Empress Mantuāb and the "Recreation Hall" of Dāwit III were the most outstanding. 175* 633 361 643 •

In their political endeavors, Gondar's monarchs began by upholding the Abyssinian tradition of a warrior king. Though unable to secure definitive victories over his enemies, Fāsil was continually joining battle with them. He spent all but five of his thirty-five years of rule on the warpath. The reign of Yohānnes the Pious was marked more by religious than military preoccupations, but warfare on a small scale was carried out during half the years he ruled. Yohānnes' son, Iyāsu the Great, seized the spear with renewed vigor and brought Gondar to the pinnacle of its might. Iyāsu's campaigns carried him to far parts of the empire, some of which were not again to be visited by a triumphant Amhara king until two centuries later. 175* 643

On Iyāsu's return from one of his famous field tours, Gondar suffered a misfortune that ushered in a long era of political disorganization. Learning that his favorite concubine had died and been buried while he was away, the grief-stricken Iyāsu withdrew to one of the monastic islands of Lake Ṭānā. His son, Takla Hāymānot, took advantage of the situation to have himself proclaimed emperor; and shortly after, probably encouraged by those of the clergy who mistrusted Iyāsu's sympathy for Catholicism, he had his father assassinated on the isle.

The next four emperors had short and brutish reigns. Takla Hāymānot, Tēwoflos, and Yosṭos were occupied mainly with the quashing of conspiracy and rebellion. Even so, they had time for the favored sports of hunting wild animals and raiding Galla and Negroid tribes. Dāwit III, it seems, did not even accomplish that. The chief slaughter in his reign was of the local clergy; he brought Muslim Galla to massacre hundreds of the monks and priests of Gondar, for they had opposed his theological views. All four emperors ended ignobly. Takla Hāymānot was stabbed to death; Tēwoflos was probably poisoned; Yosṭos, not of the Solomonic line, was forcibly deposed; and Dāwit III was poisoned. Bakāffā was more careful to protect himself from pretend-

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

*175 • 643 ers than were his predecessors. He spent his days breaking the power of the feudal lords and strengthening the hand of the monarchy, and died a natural death.

Iyāsu II was the last of the Gondar emperors to rule with full power. He, too, had to spend much of his military energy suppressing conspirators. One pretender maintained a long siege of Gondar, and although his troops never succeeded in storming the castle, they destroyed much of the capital. After checking the rebels, Iyāsu II withdrew from the political affairs and became absorbed in private pursuits. Later, stung by the popular ridicule of his inactivity, he launched a major campaign against the Fung kingdom of Senaar. The net result of that venture was eighteen thousand dead and the depletion of his treasury. The subsequent subdual of Lāstā, a rebel region for generations, and Iyāsu's raids against tribes in the Athārā district were not sufficient to redeem that defeat or restore the force of Gondar.

The political history of Gondar after the assassination of Iyāsu the Great is that of a fairly steady decline. The power of the monarchy was weakened by frequent coups d'état: no fewer than twenty-five emperors were deposed in the century and a half between Iyāsu I and Tēwodros. The power of central government was weakened by the increased strength of the nobles, each pursuing his personal interests. The power of the Abyssinian nation was weakened by the influx of Galla, who entered Gondar as prisoners and mercenary troops and finally, with the marriage of Iyāsu II to the daughter of a Galla chieftain, reached the royal court itself. The succession of emperors after Iyāsu II is largely a list of figureheads, living their brief spells in the dreary pomp into which the court had fallen, while the real power was wielded by independent lords throughout the land.

*175 643 633 517 The history of Gondar, however, is more than a chronicle of military expeditions and political intrigues. It is above all a history of the Amhara's most concentrated attempt to cultivate their religious and aesthetic culture, some aspect of which stimulated most of Gondar's sovereigns.

Fāsil, we have seen, was greatly interested in architecture. In addition to his many constructions in and around Gondar, he rebuilt the old cathedral at Aksum, which had been in ruins since the pillage of Ahmad Grāñ. Fāsil's interest in religion, moreover, extended beyond the building of churches. He sought to promote the integrity of the Ethiopian Church by expelling the Jesuits, and assisted its restoration by fixing rules for the ministration of church services.

Yohānnes the Pious was devoted to the furtherance of religious studies. He built a library to house religious manuscripts, as well as two new churches. Possessed of an unusual decorative bent, he had the walls of the library covered with a yellowish plaster and raised designs in stucco, and he himself painted miniatures on some of the manuscripts. His queen, Sebla Wangel,

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sponsored the translation of works from Arabic. Among these were *Laws of the Kings,* a collection of civil and canon laws which became the official basis for judication, and a penitential manual, *Spiritual Medicine,* the last major production in Ge'ez literature.

Yohānnes also continued Fāsil's work of "purifying" the church. He decreed that descendants of the Portuguese must leave Ethiopia unless they joined the Orthodox Church and that Muslims must reside apart, either in their own villages or in ghettos. Ordained as a priest before becoming emperor, Yohānnes followed keenly the theological disputes of his day. Toward the end of his reign he convoked a synod in Gondar to discuss the nature of the Holy Spirit in Christ, the chief theological question in Ethiopian history.

Iyāsu I, like many of Ethiopia's rulers, appears to have been moved by deep religious feeling. Describing Iyāsu's religiosity, one of the priests of Gondar wrote an eulogy a few years after his death:

> The king used to stand at the window of his palace . . . and listen from his tower on high to the singing of the priests and learned men, to their gentle hymns which moistened the bones by their exceeding tenderness. When their offerings pleased him greatly he was pierced with affection for them and drawn by the harmony of their heavenly peace. For this reason . . . he would prepare for them dinners filled with delights, and bid them eat with him in his royal chambers, ornamented all about with the beauty of pure gold and wrought silver. He would take off his gold necklace and present it to them. He adorned them with garments of purple and of staffs interwoven with gold from the treasury of his kingdom. . . . None of the kings before him had done such as he, and none of the clergy of yore had been treated as were his priests and learned men. After the dinners, the king and his priests together sang hymns of joy and jubilation all night long in the palace—in their time of pleasure, in the sweetness of divine ministry.*

Iyāsu the Great did much to establish Gondar as the most important center of religious culture in Ethiopia. To this end he brought outstanding priests and learned men from all over the country to his capital. From Gojjam, for example, he brought the great master of religious verse, Kiflē Yohānnes, whose lines are remembered even today. The number of teachers in Gondar in his time exceeded five hundred; there were one hundred and fifty at his church Dabra Berhān Selassie alone.* It was under Iyāsu I that the classic subject matter of the higher religious studies in Abyssinia—*zēmā* ("religious

* Dabra Berhān Selassie, one of the two churches built by Iyāsu I, is the only one of the original churches of Gondar which survived later conflagrations of the city. The original paintings which covered its walls have been preserved, as well as the remarkable ceiling from which rows of wide-eyed angels look down from between wooden beams. The church provides separate places for nobility and commoners, and a balcony for the emperor.

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

#175 643 633 517 chant"), *qenē*, and *tergum* ("interpretation")—is said to have received its definitive organization.

Dāwit III appears to have had a pronounced interest in Amharic folk song, for the more perfect enjoyment of which he built a special hall in the imperial compound. Because of this he has been called "Dāwit the Singer"—no term of praise in a land where minstrelsy is looked down on and where serious deportment is expected of royalty. Actually, this epithet, with its connotation of "playboy," was not deserved. Dāwit was a religious man, and in his brief reign built two churches. Knowledgeable Gondarēs today insist that, at first, even the priests were happy to join him in the amusement hall to listen to the one-stringed fiddles and the witty songs. Only after Dāwit's partiality to the [798] Unctionist doctrine (that the humanity of Christ was made divine through the unction of the Holy Spirit) led him to persecute the Unionist clergy (who hold that humanity and divinity are blended in the single nature of Christ) did they abuse his music hall and tarnish his name.[7]

[341] Interest in architecture was revived by Bakāffā. He constructed a long U-shaped castle which, together with the new castle of his Empress Mantuāb, completed the major complex of buildings in Gondar. Mantuāb's castle is [532] noted for bas-reliefs of the Ethiopian Cross, while her other castle at nearby Qusquam is decorated with bas-reliefs depicting saints and animals as well.

The tastes of Iyāsu II were especially refined. He cultivated extensive gardens and orchards, an unusual pursuit for an Amhara monarch. He built a large and handsome church. He began to construct a palace, in the lavish [344] decoration of which he took a personal interest. Budge writes of this:

> A number of Christians who had fled from Smyrna took refuge in Gondar, and the king employed them to decorate his palace with filigree work. The upper parts of the walls of the throne room were covered with three rows of Venetian mirrors set in gilded copper frames, and their lower parts . . . with slabs of ivory. The roof was made of painted cane mosaic, the work of the Falasha. . . . Iyāsu II spent his days with the workmen, and himself learned to do some of the work under the direction of the Greek workmen.[8]

#175 633 517 The decline of imperial power at Gondar after Iyāsu II did not produce a slackening of the cultural activities that had been concentrated there. During the reign of Takla Hāymānot II (1769–77), for example, when the actual [643] power at Gondar was in the hands of a lord from Tigre, seven more churches were built. One of these, Ba'ātā Māryām, eventually became one of the most [874] famous schools for the teaching of *aquāquām* ("religious dance"), and in its heyday boasted 276 masters. Another, Abi Egzi, became noted for instruction in *tergum*, and is still a leading school for such studies.

[538] The composition of verse, in forms which had become canonized during the early Gondar period, continued to flourish. As political turmoil often

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

left Gondar for Shoa, where he became a favorite at the court of Emperor Menelik.

Alaqā Gabra Hānnā was not the only one to leave Gondar in the latter part of the nineteenth century. Conditions there had become increasingly miserable. In 1866 Tēwodros, angered by the opposition of the Gondarē clergy to his plans for unifying the country through a standing national army, turned his wrath against them into a fearful pillage of the churches of Gondar.* The next emperor, Takla Giyorgis, worked feverishly to rebuild Gondar during his few years in power (1869–72). It was to no avail. In 1887 a large army of dervishes invaded Ethiopia from the Sudan and sacked Gondar, destroying it more completely than had Tēwodros.

The priests and monks who survived carried on. Gondar remained an important center for instruction in *aquāquām* and *tergum*, though Gojjam became more important for the study of *qenē* and other schools in Bagemder and Tigre for the study of *zēmā*. The civil order, however, was thoroughly demoralized. Gondarēs left in large numbers for the countryside or made their way to Lāstā and more distant provinces.

At the time of the dervish invasion, the churchmen of Gondar appealed to Emperor Yohānnes for succor. The text of their message—the last utterance from the old capital—began as follows:

> O master! The heathen have come into thine inheritance; thy holy temple have they defiled; they have laid Gondar in heaps. The dead bodies of thy servants have they given to be meat unto the fowls of the heaven, the flesh of thy saints unto the beasts of the earth. Their blood have they shed like water round about Dambiyā; and there was none to bury them.[11]

Yohānnes responded at once. It was to revenge defenseless Gondar that he led the expedition against the dervishes which cost him his life, thereby leaving the way open for the accession of the House of Manz.

The Role of Manz

Manz is a rugged rural area of about 850 square miles located in the northeast horn of Shoa Province.[12] It lies on a broad plateau at a height of ten thousand feet above sea level. This plateau is crosscut by a number of rivers which flow westerly to become part of the great Blue Nile Basin. The valleys of the rivers are flanked by fairly abrupt cliffs, which make travel from one part of Manz to another slow going. These rivers form boundaries between the geographical divisions within Manz, which is divided into three major parts: Māmā Meder in the south, Lālo Meder in the center, and Gērā Meder in the north. The entire area of Manz is itself bounded by steep mountains.[13]

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* Fortunately he preserved hundreds of manuscripts from Gondar's churches which eventually found their way to the British Museum after the Napier Expedition against Tēwodros in 1868.

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

grandson of Gērā. Thanks to the intercession of his mother, Sāhla Selassie was able to reach his truculent kinsmen. In response to his appeal for help against the Galla forces, the Manzēs came in great numbers and saved the day. A vivid reconstruction of the final battle is provided by Harris:

> [Matako] and his gallant sons were everywhere in the thickest of the fight. His shout, rising high over the storm, animated the faint-hearted, and his presence roused to new life and exertion the successful partisan. Many of the Amhara bands were already reeling from the repeated shock of the wild riders of the Hawash [the Galla horsemen], when suddenly, in the very heat of the action, a large body of warriors, clothed in black mantles, and armed with long heavy spears, rushed down the hill on foot, and, prostrating themselves as they passed the royal unbrellas, descended fresh into the arena. The fierce inhabitants of Mans had sped to the rescue from their hereditary estates, and their savage ferocity and reckless bravery was well known throughout the land. The relations and the household retainers of the rebel attempted to breast the storm, but they were scattered like autumnal leaves before the angry blast; and the chief arrived to the succour only to behold the spot strewed with the bodies of his stoutest partisans. . . . A panic seized the pagans; and, dismayed and broken-hearted, they fled tumultously in every direction.[35]

Of the arts of peace, Sāhla Selassie was particularly absorbed in the development of manual crafts. He brought masons and carpenters from Gondar and took a personal interest in the work of his metalsmiths. He was eager to learn of European technical skills and showed much hospitality to missions from the British and French governments, with whom he concluded treaties of friendship and commerce.

In Gondar, Sāhla Selassie's province was known as "the most populous and most wisely governed" in the country.[36] His assumption of the title of *negus* had been urged by some of the Gondar nobility and clergy, for they looked to him for help in combatting the spread of Islamic influence by the Muslim Galla chief, Rās 'Ali. Sāhla Selassie needed little urging; his sights were set on the highest title of all—*negusa nagast* ("king of kings," or "emperor"). Yet he, like his father, was premature. Two more generations were to be needed before that triumph.

Abyssinia could not wait. The dissolution of imperial power and the inroads of Islam had proceeded too far. Unification of the country under a powerful monarch was the obvious need of the day. The process was begun by a rebel from Qwārā, who vanquished in turn the Rāses of Gojjam, Bagemder, and Tigre, and proclaimed himself emperor in 1855 as Tēwodros II.

Shoa could not long remain untouched by Tēwodros. The successor to Sāhla Selassie, his son Haile Malakot, tried to save Shoa's autonomy by leading an expedition to fight Tēwodros in Wallo, but found his camp impreg-

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

#175 • 643 nable. As the rainy season was approaching, Haile Malakot retreated to Shoa, where he fell sick and died. For the first time since Nagāssi, Shoa was left without an effective leader. Tēwodros marched into Manz from Wallo, and Shoa capitulated with little struggle. Eleven-year-old Menelik, son of Haile Malakot, was taken hostage.

Ten years later Menelik escaped from the camp of Tēwodros and regained Shoa. Slowly and carefully he built up his power. Tēwodros' reign raced to its tragic end. Takla Giyorgis II reigned briefly at Gondar, the last emperor to sit there. Yohānnes IV of Tigre governed the country for seventeen years. When Yohānnes died, Negus Menelik was forty-five and ready. Nagāssi's seed, eight generations later, reached the throne of all Ethiopia on November 3, 1889.

CULTURAL PROFILES

The Manzē Ethos

#175 185 The goals of Nagāssi and his descendants, apart from simple increase of power, were to recover the lands taken from their fathers and to stiffen the [181] authority of Christianity in Shoa. Their success was virtually unbroken by reason of exceptional soldierly prowess and political perseverance. These are ideals and qualities embodied par excellence in the people of Manz.

423 181 [428] Sanctity of *rĭst*, or land inherited from one's parents, is a cardinal value in the Manzē scheme of things. Such land must not be given or sold to anyone who is not a close relative. People generations removed from actual residents of Manz still retain claims to family land there, still cherish the idea that if they so desired they could go back and live on it. As an urbanized Manzē once told his nephew in Addis Ababa: "No matter how far you travel abroad, no matter how long you stay away, you will always be able to think of your [539] family land in Manz as your true home." This sentiment is expressed in a proverb:

> *Ya-Manz rĭst be-shi amatu/la-bālabētu.*
> Manz *rĭst* to the thousandth year/belongs to the owner.

A squatter may fight to keep his land from falling to some stranger who claims it as having belonged to his grandfather, but in his heart he respects the values that support such a claim.

[577] By Manzē standards the good man is thus one who defends the land of his fathers, seeing that it is not sold to outsiders or that foreigners do not come to [685] take it. If someone plows another's land without permission, he must be punished. If the matter can be settled through litigation, well and good; if it requires recourse to violence, so be it. To let such an offense go unavenged [691] would be the worst sort of shame. Grievances concerning their "hereditary

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Perhaps this sort of disposition was not unrelated to the part Manz played in sparking the restoration of Amhara rule in Shoa, thereby preparing the way for the dramatic resurgence and expansion of the Ethiopian state at the end of the nineteenth century.

The Gondarē Ethos

The unique character of Gondar derives first of all from the fact that it was a city. During the whole period of Ethiopian history reviewed in this chapter, the Gondar period was the only time in which the emperors resided in a fixed capital, and Gondar was the only permanent population center that grew beyond the contours of a large village. As in ancient Egypt before the rise of Thebes, the concept of the city had played scarcely any role in the political thinking of the Amhara, and so anomalous was the rise of Gondar that Ludolphus, writing in the fifth decade after the founding of Gondar, could not believe stories that Gondar was a large city and predicted that "perhaps in a few years there will be nothing to be seen of it."[38]

Like many oriental cities, Gondar consisted more of a collection of small homogeneous societies than of a diffused heterogeneous urban population. The city was divided into several quarters, each of which lived its own life. The imperial compound was of course foremost of these. It contained the great complex of buildings erected during more than a hundred years, from Fāsil to Iyāsu II, and was the seat of affairs of state. The compound was separated from the rest of the city by a stone wall, whose twelve well-guarded gates each served a special function or class of people.[39]

The nobility resided in a quarter known as Gaing Bēt. Here the dwellings were spaced at comfortable distances, and nearly every house was surrounded by a garden. Abyssinians of lower rank lived in the more densely populated sections of Faras Bēt and Denkākē.

The Christian hierarchy had its own quarters. The *abuna*, an Egyptian monk appointed by the Coptic Patriarch at Alexandria as spiritual head of the Ethiopian Church, lived with his retinue in one sector.[40] Another area, Eçhagē Bēt, was reserved for the Amhara monk who served as administrative head of the Church. Each church compound, moreover, was the focus of another residential section, where its clergy kept their modest huts. The Eçhage Bēt and the church compounds were considered sanctuaries and thus, in theory at least, were secure from plunderers. The Gondarēs and wealthy people from the country used these areas as a safety vault for their valuables.

The ethnic groups which settled in Gondar had their respective ghettos. The Muslims lived in the lower part of the city adjacent to the river Qīha, which was convenient for their ritual ablutions. They were looked down on by the Christians, and meat slaughtered by one group would not be touched by the other. Poncet observed that when an Abyssinian met a Muslim in the

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

tical character of Gondar has been implanted deeply enough so that one young Gondarē, commenting on the absence of dance halls such as are found in other Ethiopian cities, remarked: "This place is one big monastery."

In accord with Haile Selassie's program of centralization, the chief provincial administrators in Gondar are not local men. This has created a subtle problem for the national government. The Gondarēs cannot forget that their city was the capital of Ethiopia for more than two hundred years. They view the Shoans as political upstarts and love to refer to the Shoan Amhara as "Galla." As a result, Shoans in high offices at Gondar have found themselves boycotted by the natives. Their wishes have frequently been ignored by local subordinates or the local populace. They have not been invited to take part in the social life of the Gondarēs. All this has made the lot of Shoan emissaries in Gondar frustrating and lonely.

In order to increase the Gondarē's identification with the national government, its representatives in Gondar have tried in various ways to assert the symbolic supremacy of Addis Ababa. The traditional site for celebrating the festival of Masqal—the great sycamore near Fāsil's castle—has been shifted to the modern Haile Selassie I Square. An imposing sculpture is to be placed over the tomb of Nagāsi, and a principal street in Gondar has been named after him. Plans are afoot to outshine the traditional marketplace with one enhanced by modern facilities, to be named Haile Selassie I Market.

Despite the evident satisfaction with which one Shoan administrator noted that "the Gondarēs are not so proud any more," even for Shoa's purposes the traditional prestige of Gondar cannot be completely eradicated. The government gains much profit by extolling Ethiopia's long history. The flight to Gondar has become a standard part of the itinerary for foreign dignitaries. Gondar remains, after the stelae of Aksum and the monoliths of Lalibela, the most impressive visible reminder of the Ethiopian past.

Manz Today

The accession of the House of Manz to the throne of Ethiopia has given Manz much prestige in the national capital. Because Menelik and his successors filled the government with people from their home area, numerous higher officials of the imperial Ethiopian government are also of Manzē origin. Partly for these reasons, partly because of their scanty knowledge of Ethiopian geography, many Ethiopians born and raised in Addis Ababa claim to be of Manzē ancestry, even though their families may in fact have come from Merhābētē or Bulgā or other parts of Shoa.

Due to the close tie between the present imperial family and the homeland of Manz, a special affection persists between Haile Selassie and the Manzēs. The latter are said to have a standing invitation at the palace, including the

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643 571 right to a direct audience at any time. The Emperor is known to glow with pleasure when a subject with whom he is speaking reveals that he comes from Manz. The Manzēs, for their part, proudly refer to their area as *ya-negus agar* ("king's country"). They are perhaps the most devoted of all Ethiopians to the present Crown. However, many stories are told to show that this loyalty has not dissolved their intractable spirit. For example, when asked to select a representative for Ethiopia's first elected parliament in 1957, some of them were indignant: "We already have *our* representative in the capital, and if he isn't able to do the job himself, let him step down and hand it to somebody else."

871 658 Despite their expressed loyalty to Haile Selassie, the Manzēs stubbornly oppose the program with which he is publicly most associated and whose portfolio he has retained, as Minister of Education, from 1943 to the present day. The adults of Manz object to having their children attend the government schools. In many cases where a child has elected to attend school on his own, his parents have cut off all support. The four schools in Manz thus have [162] an enrolment far below capacity, totaling (as of 1960) less than four hundred in this area of perhaps fifty to sixty thousand families.[49] Those hardy youngsters who do attend school often do so in rags and with an empty stomach.

[857] One reason for this determined opposition to the government schools is the obvious economic one: children must stay at home to tend the herds. This is a problem all over rural Ethiopia, but still the schools in many other areas are overcrowded. Another reason is that, as we have seen, Manz was not interested in education in the old days. Few Manzēs learned to read in the church schools. When a boy showed unusual talent and interest in traditional studies he had to travel to Gondar, which often meant running away from Manz.

871 658 186 829 The crux of Manzē defiance of the new educational system, however, is cultural fundamentalism. The Manzēs keep their children away from the government schools because they fear that the students there are learning something that threatens the old ways. In particular, they do not like their children to learn the language of the *faranj* ("European") or to be exposed to Ethiopians who have been taught by *faranj* and thereby infected by alien ideas. Tending the farm, keeping the fasts, defending land and self—that is the sum and substance of Manzē education, beyond which there is nothing a boy needs to learn.

829 648 186 Undoubtedly part of this dread of *faranj* learning is based on the Manzēs' one experience with the white man: the Fascist occupation. As one of the strongholds of patriotic resistance to the occupation, Manz and the Manzēs became the object of the invader's unyielding fury. Over miles and miles of Manz not a home or church was spared. The inhabitants were either killed, or fled to safer areas in Galla country, or joined the underground opposition—

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new African nations is proving to be an effective agency for reducing such prejudices among the students. The broader political identity afforded by pan-Africanism may in turn be promoting a more genuine national feeling among the younger educated Ethiopians, a feeling of solidarity that begins to encompass all the ethnic groups in their land.

Still another sphere in which the Ethiopian students have had some room for the development of political values has been the study of history. The students were therefore asked to name the persons in Ethiopian and in world history whom they most liked and disliked, and to explain why.

The three most liked figures in Ethiopian history were Haile Selassie, mentioned by 36 per cent of the respondents; Tēwodros (30 per cent); and Menelik (16 per cent). Named much less frequently were Yohānnes (mostly by Tigre students); military heroes of Menelik's day, and of the resistance during the Italian occupation; and church figures, especially Abuna Peṭros (the great Orthodox martyr of the occupation).

The reasons given for naming Haile Selassie include the wide variety of respects for which his reign has been praised. He is liked for uniting Ethiopia, supporting education, fighting for the country's freedom, introducing modern civilization, and generally "helping the country." The reasons given extend to expressions of very personal attachment, such as "he gives me education," "he supplies everything," and "he is my guardian."

The reasons given for liking Tēwodros or Menelik best are more circumscribed, and they are balanced by a number of other responses in which these two emperors are named as the most *disliked* persons in Ethiopian history (Tēwodros, 7 per cent; Menelik, 4 per cent). Tēwodros is liked chiefly because of his bravery and his attempt to unite the nation, while he is disliked because of his cruelty. Menelik is liked chiefly because of his defense of the country at Adowa and his efforts to modernize Ethiopia and introduce education; and he is disliked for having sold parts of the country to Europeans. Yohānnes is mentioned about the same number of times in both categories (2 per cent): positively, for his courage in battle and his Christian zeal and, negatively, for his intolerance in persecuting non-Christians.

Līj Iyāsu (11 per cent) and Aḥmad Grāñ (8 per cent) are the most disliked figures in Ethiopian history. They are associated with specific offenses: Iyāsu with being an "incompetent ruler," "encouraging Islam," and "chasing after women," and Grāñ with burning churches and massacring Christians. Three other persons in this category are Sultan Ibrahim (3 per cent), for selling the port of Assab; Dajāzmāch Haile Selassie Gugsa (4 per cent), for fighting on the side of the Italians in 1935; and Yodit (2 per cent), the legendary queen who is said to have sacked Aksum in the tenth century.

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*883 men and outstanding commoners in the vicinity of the royal court. But with
891 the importation of hundreds of foreign teachers, the establishment of an ex-
178 tensive system of secondary schools and colleges, and the provision of economic support for thousands of post-elementary students, a real structural change came about. Although the school system remained completely subordinate to the throne, it introduced a number of processes that had a dynamic of their own.

*883 As we have seen, these new socialization processes have subjected the
121 modern adolescents to many sorts of conflict and strain. They have been
178 placed in conflict with their parents, and hence within themselves, on the basic issues of work and, particularly, marriage. They have been subjected to the simultaneous appeal of traditional and modern patterns in virtually all aspects of culture. They have been forced to make choices in numerous areas, while their traditional counterparts have customarily been prevented from making any kind of choice at all.

It might seem that such a situation would breed a troubled generation, distraught and disoriented, knowing what we do about the psychological hazards of rapid culture change. And indeed, among the modern adolescents of the fifties, one might find classical cases of anomie and identity diffusion, boys who confess, "Nothing seems worthwhile to me . . . I am confused, being brought up as I was on the traditional beliefs without questioning and then suddenly being forced to ask questions," or, "The problem of choosing the work I should go into is my only real problem right now, but because of it I find it hard to make decisions about anything. If this suffering is the price of freedom, I am not sure it is worth the price."

Such cases, however, were the exception, not the rule. Most of the students were working hard to get ahead in the world or enjoying their newly acquired freedom and camaraderie. Almost all our respondents had ready answers concerning the sort of work they want to go into, and what they
[828] would do if they could have any wish granted. Comparing themselves with their elders, they presented a positive self-image. They regarded themselves as more "civilized," "well built," and "generous" than their parents' generation, albeit somewhat lazier and less polite; and in comparison with Ethiopians a decade older, saw themselves as "better educated," "more clever," "more adventurous," and better able to "enjoy life." Nearly all of them (92 per cent) said that they felt either "enthusiastic" or "hopeful" about their
[181] personal future. So one could characterize the Ethiopian post-elementary students of the fifties as relatively buoyant, clear-headed, self-confident, and enjoying their situation of culture contact and change far more than suffering it. How may this be explained?

[643] One great source of their strength was a sense of dependence on the Emperor. As founder of the Ethiopian school system, Haile Selassie has

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appeared to the students as the source of their new goods; of their learning, health, and well-being. Because of a feeling that "he supplies everything" and "he is my guardian," students of all grades have been among the most sincere and enthusiastic supporters of Haile Selassie. So their adoption of Western patterns has from the outset been legitimated by the highest traditional authority, and the harshness of the culture clash has been softened by the symbolization of both tradition and modernity in the Imperial Person. Here the traditional pattern of "functional deviance" re-asserts itself. The adolescent rebels against the traditional demands of his parents, but expends that deviant energy on behalf of legitimate symbols of the national society.

Related to this was a strong sense of national purposiveness. *Agwēnennā negusēn tammrē iredālhu* ("Having studied, I will serve my country and my king")—this was the motto of most Ethiopian students in the forties and fifties. The conspicuous needs of their country provided clear goals in terms of which students felt they were preparing themselves.

Still another motive force was the need for personal justification. The many students who in a sense deserted their home villages or families in order to spend years in school carried with them an ambition eventually to show the folks back home that they were right after all. This involved the conviction that going to school was the right, at times the righteous, thing: a blind faith that simply by continuing along the road of education they would make good in the world and return home some day as a sort of hero. Here, too, is an echo of the old deviant pattern: the renegade returning home, after many years, as a successful churchman or warlord.

The economic situation, finally, was encouraging for students. It seemed for many years that advanced training, including study abroad, would be available for whoever qualified, and that the demand for educated personnel was so great that the job opportunities for students would be endless.

By 1961, however, all these sources of adolescent morale—royal legitimation, national purpose, personal justification, and economic opportunity—had been to some extent undercut. Some of the changing circumstances have already been referred to. The effect of the rebellion of December, 1960, and its aftermath was to weaken the tie between Haile Selassie and the post-elementary students. With his moral authority somewhat undermined, the students could no longer use him to symbolize a conflict-free transition to modernity. Nor could they any longer count on him to "supply everything" indefinitely: in the summer of 1962 the Emperor announced the immediate suspension of room and board benefits for the students of the University College.

The students' outlook has further been rendered less sanguine by the confusion attending the political crisis of the sixties. They no longer feel the keen sense of national purpose, to serve "country and king." Their ideals in this regard were already weakening before the rebellion by virtue of increased

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565 178 463 [701] During the reign of Haile Selassie, the infrastructure of Ethiopian society has become more differentiated. A large standing army, an air force, and a small navy have been recruited and trained by foreign military missions. The modernization of transport and communication has produced a sizable class of semiskilled operatives—truck drivers, airline employees, telephone operators, typesetters, etc. The expansion of government has produced a legion of clerks. In the towns tertiary occupational roles, like salesmen and barbers, have come into being, and the establishment of factories has engendered a small industrial labor force.

All such people tend to differ from the traditional lower classes in their relative enthusiasm for *seltänē* ("civilization"). Still more enthusiastic are those who have had more intimate and prolonged exposure to the fruits of *seltänē:* domestic servants in *faranj* homes; students of the secondary schools and colleges; Imperial Bodyguard troops who served in the Korean campaign and recently in the Congo; and highland Eritreans, whose experience under sixty years of Italian colonial administration has rendered them far more modernized than people of other provinces.

178 571 554 565 Similarly, the reign of Haile Selassie has witnessed the emergence of new elite groups. A "new nobility" of government officials and urban plutocrats has taken place beside the old. In addition, a nascent intelligentsia has attained a precarious high status, resting mostly on the esteem of students, some military officers, and resident Westerners. The integrative dilemma of Ethiopia today has more to do with conflicts among and within its various elites than with tribal enmities or masses in revolt.*

643 591 565 Hovering over these four groups, kindred with each but superior to all, has been the personality of the present emperor. Indeed, the history of Ethiopia in the last four decades has for the most part been the story of Haile Selassie's efforts to direct and control the destinies of the old and new elites. The considerable success with which he has done this is a tribute, not only to his own remarkable manipulative skills, but also to the majesty of the office which he possesses. The position of *negusa nagast* has traditionally monopolized the highest reaches of the Abyssinian system of social stratification; constituting, as it were, an elite of One.

THE TRADITIONAL ORDER

643 *The Lofty Throne*

The emperor comprises an elite in the original sense of the word, for to the Ethiopians he is Elect of God (*seyuma egziäbhër*) according to the conventional Ge'ez honorific.

* Although, as was suggested earlier, tribal and religious differences *may* generate new integrative crises in the future.

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

conventional Ge'ez honorific. Sanctity of the imperial office is an antique theme, deriving apparently from pagan ideas of divine kingship which were transplanted from South Arabia in the first millennium B.C. along with other aspects of Sabaean culture.[1] But the working ideology which has upheld this conception during the period of Amhara hegemony draws on Semitic motifs of later origin, motifs which received their classic formulation in the fourteenth century national epic, *Kebra Nagast* (*The Glory of Kings*).

The effect of the *Kebra Nagast* is to make the Ethiopian emperor both physical descendant and spiritual successor to the kings of Israel. The genealogical tie is argued by the legendary union of the Queen of Sheba and King Solomon, whose offspring, Menelik I, is held to have fathered the line of royalty which allegedly ruled at Aksum and was restored in the thirteenth century. The transfer of religious mission is shown both in a prophetic dream attributed to Solomon, in which God's favor passes from Israel to Ethiopia, and in the story of Menelik's theft from Jerusalem of the most sacred symbol of the Judaic mission, the Ark of the Covenant.* Furthermore, while at the time the *Kebra Nagast* was written the Ethiopian monarch was presented as a friendly cousin of the "king of Rome"—an echo of the sixth-century alliance between Caleb of Ethiopia and Justin I of Byzantium[2]—thereafter he came to be regarded as successor to the latter as well, and hence the sole defender of the true Christian faith.

The Ethiopians have elaborated on this exalted conception of their monarchy in other literary forms.[3] In royal chronicles and hymns of praise which span seven centuries, the emperors are celebrated for superlative beauty and superhuman powers. In splendor of countenance they are likened to the sun; in awesomeness of power, to the lion; in religious character and divine force, to the kings of Israel and, at times, to God Himself.

In life as well as in literature the person of the emperor was clad with an aura of sanctity. Ethiopian subjects have had to prostrate themselves and refrain from lifting their eyes in his presence. An analogous show of deference was expected when they received royal messages from afar; the recipient had to hear the message outside his home, standing, and naked above the waist.[4] The emperors rarely permitted themselves to be seen in public, and were often secluded by curtains while eating or drinking. They were not addressed directly, but through an interlocutor. Zar'a Yā'qob, whose officers were said to have kissed the earth each time they heard the sound of his voice, carried the demand for social distance so far that pages attached to his court were not permitted to have contact with anybody from outside, and were put to death if they dared to fraternize with local inhabitants.[5]

* The orthodox still maintain that the original ark containing the stone tablets of the Law is located at Aksum. It is symbolized by the *tābot* found in every Ethiopian church.

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643 17 Accession to the throne involved two rites, anointment by oil and bestowal of the crown. Authority to conduct these rites was vested in the Egyptian archbishop, the *abuna*. The formal coronation took place in a ceremony for which in former times it was expected that the parties repair to the ancient sanctuary of Aksum. The change in status brought about through [551] coronation was symbolized by the assumption of a new name, as, for example, Rās Tafari Makonnen became Haile Selassie I. The royal insignia included a ring, worn on the right ear; the royal flag, the staff of which bore a cross resting on a ball; and special drums, trumpets, and flutes.[6] Also included was a red silk parasol known as *zhān ţelā* (origin of the present-day Amharic word for umbrella). When the emperor was in procession they included a white horse with small silver bells at his head, a silver shield, and a white headband of muslin or fine silk.[7]

Successors to the throne were not determined according to a fixed rule like primogeniture. Membership in the Solomonian line was normally a prerequisite, and the unsuccessful reign of Yoṣṭos (1711–16) demonstrates the hazards of rule when no pretense to such affiliation could be maintained. Usually, however, there were several legitimate candidates for the position, and the absence of fixed procedures for choosing among them has meant that the death of an emperor was often a time of confusion and political improvisation. At times the monarch designated his successor and swore the grandees of the realm to an oath of support, as when Menelik named Līj Iyāsu; at times a single powerful lord, like Rās Mikā'ēl Sehul at Gondar, was the effective king-maker; at times the judgment and interests of a number of potentates, including on occasion the queen mother, were determinant.

The role of the emperor was largely symbolic, a quality which André Caquot has stressed.

> The king is guarantor of peace and prosperity for his entire country. Here the superhuman virtue attributed to the sovereign by the Ethiopian royal ideology manifests itself most clearly. It is not so much a question of his administering the country politically as it is that he guarantee order by his very presence and the virtue inherent in him.[8]

The idea that the mere presence of the monarch was a guarantee of civil order is reflected in the idiom *agaru negus* ("country of a king"), which means a tranquil land. Related to this conception is the requirement that the body of the emperor be devoid of any physical defect or deformity, so that the well-being of the body politic may be properly symbolized.

But during most of Ethiopia's history the emperor was by no means merely an awesome figurehead, aloof from the works and turmoil of his realm. It was customary for him to serve the society actively in a number of ways. He had to organize the defense of the country and lead troops into battle—if

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necessary, to die on the battlefield, as did Galāwdēwos, Yohānnes IV, and others. He had to maintain a minimum of political order, balancing off contending ambitions and subduing rebellious elements. Another important function was that of ultimate arbiter in judicial disputes.* As guardian of the church, moreover, he was active in endowing monasteries and churches and in resolving doctrinal disputes among the clergy.

To carry out these and related functions the emperor needed great wealth and political power. When the monarchy was intact he could command wealth from many sources: from the country-wide land tax (*gĭber*), in the form of honey, grain, or livestock, or such special fiscal assignments as saddles, plowshares, spears, ink, or tent pegs;[9] from assessed tithes on produce; in tribute from subject peoples, either in currency (gold, salt bars, etc.) or in kind; in revenues from traders; and from gifts from new appointees and hopeful office seekers. In theory, moreover, all the land of the empire belonged to its ruler; and, in fact, a good part of it was at his direct disposal, either for cultivation as royal estates or to distribute as compensation to those who served him.

The political power of the emperor was grounded in his command of troops supported by the royal bounty. In addition, he could command the troops of all the lords subject to his authority. Through frequent tours around the country he was able to reassert his hegemony from time to time in distant regions. But even from afar, a strong monarch could usually exert great control thanks to his authority to appoint or demote at a moment's notice any officer of the realm. As Alvares observed:

> No great lord of lands, if he is in them, can leave them, or set out for the Court on any account without being summoned by the [emperor]; and being summoned he will not fail to come for any reason. And when he sets out from the land of which he is the lord, he does not leave either wife or children or any property there, because he goes away in the expectation of never returning, since . . . [the emperor] gives when he pleases, and takes away when he pleases.[10]

The ideology of sacred monarchy served to legitimate theoretically boundless demands for wealth and power as well as to provide identity and morale for the body politic. It justified, too, occasional "deviant" behavior on the part of the monarch, virtually the only person with sufficient authority to innovate in this intensely conservative culture. The emperor has always been a primary agent of cultural innovation in Abyssinia, from the time of Ēzānā, who adopted Christianity in the fourth century; to Zar'a Yā'qob in the fifteenth

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* To this day Haile Selassie devotes several hours a week to hearing court appeals in a session known as *chelot*.

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643 17 [461] century, who instituted a number of monthly holidays and prescribed new liturgical texts; to Menelik, who introduced vaccination and the eucalyptus tree in the twentieth century. For more than a century now kings and emperors have attempted to combat the traditional Abyssinian repugnance for manual labor by themselves engaging in arduous physical work on numerous occasions.[11] Haile Selassie has followed a pattern with abundant precedents in introducing the many changes which have characterized his reign.[12]

As object of Abyssinia's highest esteem, symbol of its most cherished values, possessor of supreme wealth and power, and author of new norms, the emperor of Ethiopia thus qualifies as an elite in the more technical, sociological sense of the word as well as in its original sense of "being chosen."[13] Indeed, if more extreme interpretations of the emperor's significance are to be credited, he might even be viewed as the fountainhead of high status for all other elites. Thus Bruce, in a famous passage, declares:

> The Kings of Abyssinia are above all laws. They are supreme in all causes, ecclesiastical and civil; the land and persons of all their subjects are equally their property and every inhabitant of the kingdom is born their slave; *if he bears a higher rank it is by the king's gift; for his nearest relations are accounted nothing better.* [Italics mine.][14]

Such an interpretation, however, is more ideological than analytic. Throughout Ethiopian history one can discern definite limits to royal authority, and bases of elite status other than imperial favor.

121 643 17 It is true, as Margery Perham ... sets forth, that a primitive state of technology and severe geographical obstacles prevented the realization of imperial power to the degree that the royal ideology would have permitted.[15] Yet this failure of the monarchy "to build up any kind of administrative framework through which to exercise the absolute powers with which, by tradition and consent, it was endowed" was not simply a matter of wanting techniques. It also reflected the importance of ultimate values other than that of anointed royalty in Abyssinian culture.

121 643 17 The primary sociological limit to imperial authority was the commitment of the Abyssinian people to the tradition of their church. Religious conversion was one change which, at least in the period of Amhara hegemony, could no longer be tolerated. Za Dengel (1603–4) and Susneyos (1607–32) were brought down because of their forthright conversion to Catholicism, and the overthrow of Līj Iyāsu in 1917 was legitimated on the alleged grounds that he had become a practicing Muslim. The decline in power of Tēwodros II (1855–68) was due in no small measure to the fact that his cavalier policy toward the clergy resulted in his being branded an enemy of the church.

121 643 17 A second limit on imperial authority lay in the perennial tendency of certain regional families to become endowed with an aura of legitimacy in their

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own right. Indeed, the record of rebellions by nobility as well as clergy against the emperors of Ethiopia bespeaks a persisting dualism in the Abyssinian's disposition toward the monarchy itself. In principle, the emperor is reverenced. Widely held is the sentiment expressed in the *Kebra Nagast:* "It is not a good thing for any of those who are under the dominion of a king to revile him, for retribution belongeth to God."[16] But unquestioning deference is by no means necessarily coupled with unswerving loyalty. The Abyssinian pattern differs from the Japanese, in which total loyalty to the divine monarch calls for suicide in the wake of any disgrace one might have brought upon him. The norms of fealty to the emperor have not been so deeply internalized in Ethiopia, where the pardon and reinstatement of rebels has been a common occurrence. Among Abyssinians a veneer of genuine deference has often concealed an inner consciousness of disaffection, enabling the individual to act out rebellious wishes when the opportunity or need arises. Indeed, this ambivalence has been one of the traditional impulses behind the culture pattern of wax and gold.

The Old Nobility

The Abyssinians themselves acknowledge the existence of, in addition to the emperor, two groups of persons with pre-eminent status. These are called, both in Ge'ez and Amharic, the *makuānnent,* or "nobility," and the *kāhenāt,* or "clergy." While believing the presence of a king to be a precondition of civil order, they also regard the presence of these other elites as necessary for their good life. This attitude is expressed in the Amharic saying: "Fertility of the land [is] through the *makuānnent;* the splendor of the church [is] through the *kāhenāt.*"[17]

The term *makuānnent* may be used to refer to all secular dignitaries between the emperor and the well-to-do landowning peasantry. In strict contemporary usage, however, the *makuānnent* should be distinguished from two other classes of personages, whom we may call the "royal nobility" and the "local nobility" or "gentry." The former consists of the immediate royal family (*negusāwi bētasab*) and more distant royal relatives (*masāfent*). Because of their kinship with the Solomonic line these have at times been referred to as "chiefs of Israel."[18] Although it was customary for each new king to exile all male relatives who were potential candidates for the Crown to a high mountain fortress, more distant relatives might hold provincial governorates, and women of the royal family sometimes played an important role in court politics and provincial administration. Members of the royal nobility have normally been distinguished by special titles: *ābēto* (now vulgarized as *āto,* "Mister"), *le'ul,* and *lijj* for men; and *emebēt, le'elt,* and *wayzaro* (now vulgarized in the sense of "Mrs.") for women.

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All these titles were conferred by the emperor. But, in addition, *makuānnent* with the rank of *rās* or *dajāzmātch* had the authority to appoint lesser officers under them. The number of troops commanded by these officers varied considerably according to circumstances. Among armies, moreover, there was great variability in status; the *fitāwrāri* of an emperor naturally enjoyed much more deference than the *fitāwrāri* of a provincial *dajāzmātch*.[23]

A number of other titles represented various civil functions. These included:

āfa negus	"mouth of the king" (lord chief justice)
āzāzh *liq* (Gondar) *wambar* (Shoa)	royal judges
naggādrās	"head of merchants" (customs collector and chief official over merchants)
ṭsahāfi lām *nagāsh* *shum* *ḳānṭibā*	various titles given to provincial governors
malkaññā *meslanē*	local representatives of the emperor or provincial governors

A further set of titles was that given to the functionaries of the royal court. These were given for all court posts, including such offices as Server of the Mead (*ṭajj āsāllāfi*). Some of these titles were found exclusively at the court of the emperor; others were imitated in noble households across the land, though again, the same title naturally carried far less prestige in the provinces than when held at the imperial court. The list of court titles varied from region to region and century to century, both in its composition and its hierarchical order.[24] At any given time and place, however, a rank order was carefully respected, and confusion over protocol could provoke altercation, as was recorded in the Chronicle of Iyāsu I (1682–1706).[25]

Titles (and numbers) of the principal court functionaries, in the (descending) order of importance fixed at the time of Iyāsu I, were:

behtwaddad	chief counsellor and confidant (two)
blattēn getā	chief administrator of the palace (greater and lesser [two])
rāq māsarē or *west āzāzh*	majordomo, master of ceremonies
ṭsahāfi te'ezāz	royal scribe; keeper of the seal (two)
zhāndarabā āzazh	chief of the eunuchs

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565	*bajirond*	guardian of royal property, treasurer (two)
554	*liqa maḳuās*	king's double and keeper of the king's mule
644	*āggāfāri**	protocol officer, superintendent of banquets

The status of these dignitaries may have been particularly vulnerable, depending so closely as it did on the whims of the monarch. Nonetheless their proximity to the center of imperial power gave them unique advantages. They were in a position to receive many gifts for favors and influence, as well as to come by some part of the royal revenues and to attend the royal banquets. They were consulted, together with military commanders, provincial governors, and high ecclesiastics, on important matters of state. Lands granted to them for their services enabled them to support small retinues of their own, including, in some cases, military contingents. They were normally an important factor in promoting stability and continuity during the troubled moments that usually followed the death of an emperor.[36]

565 554 The above classification of titles is meant only to provide a quick overview of their variety; no such formal compartmentation existed in the Abyssinian perspective. All the titles converged into a single hierarchy.[37] What is more, titles were not strictly connected to offices or functions, so military titles were frequently given to court or civil functionaries. This was particularly true of [644] the court of Menelik, where, for example, the Superintendent of Royal Tents bore the title *bālāmbārās* and the Chief Hand-washer that of *gerāzmāch*.[38] [635] For centuries before, moreover, provincial governors were often known by military rather than civil titles, and men holding civil titles were liable to be called to take part in military campaigns by the sovereign.

565 The sociological reality underlying this overlapping of titles among the nobility was the essentially unspecialized nature of their role. The ideal type of the *maḳuānnent* was at once governor, soldier, and courtier. In time of war he set forth at his own expense, with his own troops, to support the cause of the emperor, or perhaps simply to defend his own regional interests. In time of peace he might sojourn, if permitted, at the court of his king or overlord, eating and drinking with his peers, giving counsel to his liege when asked, engaged in intrigue and otherwise seeking to improve his station.

[427] When not active in warfare or the affairs of court, the nobleman would repair to his lands to supervise the agricultural production and the collection [643] of rents from his tenants. The emperors rewarded nobles who served them [423] with grants of land. The higher chieftains in turn rewarded their own fol- [427] lowers accordingly. These estates were usually held *in absentia*, the peasants

* *Āggāfāri* is an important title in the courts of provincial lords but is not mentioned in the court list of Iyāsu I, nor in that of the *Sər'āta Mangest*.

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taxes collected in the name of the emperor. Concerning the imposts for which the peasants were liable, Plowden wrote in 1844:

> They pay a certain portion in kind to the Ras, or other great chief, and sometimes a regular tax in money; besides this, they must furnish oxen to plough the king's lands. Their immediate governor then takes his share in kind of every grain (say a fifth), and feeds besides a certain number of soldiers at the expense of each householder: he has rights to oxen, sheep, goats, butter, honey, and every other requisite for subsistence; he must be received with joy and feasting by his subjects whenever he visits them, and can demand from them contributions on fifty pretexts—he is going on a campaign, or has just returned from one; he has lost a horse, or married a wife; his property has been consumed by fire, or he has lost his all in battle; or the sacred duty of a funeral banquet cannot be fulfilled without their aid.[80]

Two centuries earlier, observing similar phenomena, Almeida had concluded that "generally speaking, they are all plunderers rather than governors."[81] The only restraints on their exploitative behavior have been an occasionally keen sense of Christian propriety and the limits to what an exasperated local populace will bear.

The existence of a predatory class who serve military functions and maintain a gentry subculture is a common enough feature of traditional agrarian societies. What is perhaps less common in the Abyssinian case is the constellation of factors relating to the recruitment of members into this elite.

High secular status in Abyssinia was dependent on a complex of possessions—land, political strength, and honorific titles—which tended to reinforce one another. The possession of much land has always been a basis for considerable deference in Abyssinia. As a source of produce, rents, and revenues deflected from the Crown, moreover, it was also a source of wealth to be used in building up one's political strength by rewarding able soldiers and loyal followers, and by making gifts to one's superiors. Political power was directly obtained through the acquisition of governorships. Such offices were a further basis for much deference and, through the incumbent's access to tribute, customs fees, court fees, and gifts from his subjects, of much income as well. Titles, finally, not only were universally esteemed but also entitled the bearers to a style of life which included a presumptive right to gifts and obedience from all inferiors as well as the consumption of much wealth and power.

For all these possessions, the Abyssinian noble was directly dependent on his king (or, in the case of a lesser noble, on his overlord). His dependence was twofold: land, political office, and titles came to him as gifts from the sovereign, and, what is more, their continued possession was contingent on the sovereign's continuing favor. Abyssinian "vassals" had no legal rights to their "benefices," and lands granted them could be withdrawn and given to others as the emperor wished. At the death of a feudal beneficiary his lands

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the contemporary church hierarchy, the *dabtarā* stressing their special intellectual qualification for high positions, the monks their greater piety.

The Traditional Balance

Whatever the internal fragmentation of the church—which was compounded by regionally based doctrinal controversies—it may for the moment be considered as a unified estate vis-à-vis the secular powers. This permits us to raise the question of the integration of politico-military and religious elites in traditional Abyssinian society, a question that may be discussed in terms of two relationships: that between the values represented by the two elites, and that between the interests of their respective institutions.

The social teachings of the Ethiopian Church were couched in terms of practical justice, not universal love. Thus the pacifistic strain in Christianity barely made itself felt. The priests, to be sure, were forbidden to shed blood, animal or human; but this is more in the nature of a necessity for the maintenance of ritual purity than a symbol of moral principle. They went along willingly to the battlefield in ceremonial capacity. In fact, comments d'Abbadie, most of them would reject the interdiction of their taking part in military expeditions as a denial of their rights.[80]

Far from opposing warfare, Ethiopian Christianity served rather as an inspiration and justification for wars; since much of the fighting was directed against Muslim, Judaic, or pagan peoples, the warfare took on something of a crusading tone. As for internecine war, it was commonly justified in terms of *lex talionis*, a religiously sanctioned punishment for the sins of the enemy. In this respect, then, the two elites gave impressive support to each other. The warlords were serving the church by fighting the heathen. The fate of their military expeditions, on the other hand, was assisted by the prayers of the accompanying clergy. This reciprocal dependence was symbolized by the custom of taking some *tābot* along with the army to the battlefield, and by the custom of "greeting" the church as the first thing a warrior does when he returns home.

The values of warfare and religion were further harmonized by the symbolism of the emperor, Lion of Judah. The emperor combined in his person the figures of indomitable warlord and devout—and divinely guided—Christian. This combination was an integral part of the self-image projected by many emperors, as reflected, for example, in the identification with Constantine the Great manifested by Zar'a Yā'qob and Eskender (1478–94) in their choice of throne name, and by Tēwodros II in his coronation speech.

With regard to civil policy, moreover, the nobility and clergy were in basic accord. Both groups felt a special responsibility for adjudicating disputes. Both felt that their superior status entitled them to receive substantial amounts of rent and revenues from lands granted them by the king, and to

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reverted to the Crown unless specifically reconveyed to the heir by royal proclamation. Political office was no less precarious. Governors were made and unmade—by the traditional process known as *shum-shĭr* ("appoint-demote")—in short periods of time. The powerful position of governor of the maritime province (*bähr nagäsh*) changed hands four times during the six years that Alvares spent in Ethiopia. Even when tradition assigned a certain post to the descendants of a certain lord, the emperors were able to exert control by shifting their favor from one descendant to another from year to year. Titles, unlike land and office, were granted for life, as we observed; but they were in no case hereditary, and thus every Abyssinian's hope for a title, let alone a raise in rank, depended on the grace of the king or of his major appointees.

Given these conditions, it was not possible for the nobility to become a closed, hereditary estate, or to develop a corporate identity capable of confronting the imperial will. On the contrary, thanks to the emperor's freedom to ennoble anyone whom he chose, there was a relatively high degree of social mobility, and the ranks of the upper strata were continuously being reshuffled.

Outstanding personal properties of various sorts often enabled Ethiopians of low birth to rise to high positions. The emperors and great lords conferred honors on those who served especially well in military expeditions, whatever their origins. Menelik's promotion of two Galla prisoners to rank as his highest generals is a famous case in point. The royal favor occasionally smiled on low-born Ethiopians who excelled in such qualities as physical beauty or witty repartee.[32] Unquestionable personal loyalty was another quality in high demand; freed slaves were sometimes given offices and dignities, since their lack of ties to political families made them particularly trustworthy.

Abyssinians have thus cherished the idea that they could rise to a higher station in life than that to which they were born. Comparatively few ever tried to do so, probably, but ambitious souls were never wanting. Seeking some benefice, or the glory of a title, or a position of power that would permit them to help their kinfolk or avenge themselves for a wrong suffered at the hands of some superior, they would attach themselves to the lord whose fortunes seemed brightest at the moment and hope, by valorous service and God's favor, to arrive someday at an estimable position.[33]

Nevertheless, though ability and fortune might carry any man high in the political hierarchy, he would not thereby automatically be accepted as one of the *makuännent*. A self-respecting man of noble family would resist marrying his daughter to a commoner or person of dubious parentage, no matter how high a rank the latter obtained. For the Abyssinian nobility did form a self-conscious status group with a certain hereditary base. Its members shared a sense of superiority, a consciousness of kind, and an attitude toward commoners such as that expressed by the governor Takla Giyorgis to the Jesuit

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Barradas: "Father, these villeins are like camels, they cry and groan when they are loaded, but in the end they carry the load that is put on them."[84] They set themselves off from the commoners, not only because of their style of life and subculture, but also because they came from well-known families.

Such sentiments were shared by the commoners. They would much rather be governed by a man from a noted family than by a person promoted from their own social level. The folkways expressed a disdain for the *nouvel arrivé*, for example, by poking fun at the office of *liqa makuās* (the king's double in time of battle). The *liqa makuās* was often a man from an unknown family, chosen because of his handsome features and resemblance to the king. The office permitted him to strut about in the king's clothes and inclined him to assume haughty airs. In some places it was customary to ridicule this upstart by referring to the minstrel, or *azmāri*, as *liqa makuās;* for the *azmāri*, too, was entitled to wear the kind of dress appropriate to the lord in whose banquet hall he performed, but the *azmāri* was a person of low prestige in Abyssinian society.

In other words: although the emperors could appoint and depose whenever they pleased, with or without cause; and though "the land and persons of their subjects are equally their property, and every inhabitant of their kingdom is born their slave"; by itself the principle of royal favor is clearly inadequate to explain the Abyssinian pattern of social stratification. For, unlike the neighboring kingdom of Buganda, Abyssinia was not a straightforward despotism in which the dispensation of a *kabaka* was sufficient to elevate a man into the highest social stratum.[85] The claims of a quasi-hereditary noble status group have also had to be satisfied.

How did this status group arise, and how have its claims been expressed and justified? What has been the history of its relationship with the monarchy? The existence of this class is anchored in the actual tendency for lands, office, and titles to be given to members of the same families. In reality, the emperors frequently let such possessions pass from father to son, either because they were in too distant a region or because there was no good cause for taking them away, and on occasion drew up written charters assigning grants of land to a man and his future descendants.[86] Indeed, one form of land tenure, known as *rista-gult*, was precisely a sort of hereditary fief, given in exchange for military service over the generations. In certain areas, moreover, it was a matter of tradition that the governorship be given to members of a certain family. Finally, although no man inherited a title, as son of a nobleman he might inherit the culture and facilities that would give him a much better chance than any commoner to obtain a title of his own.

Two other aspects of Abyssinian society supported this tendency toward the development of what amounted to local dynasties of nobility. One was the prestige attached to the "chiefs of Israel," any of the nobility who could

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demonstrate some affiliation with the Solomonic line; the marriage of one of these into a local dynasty contributed an added buttress to its traditionalist claims. The other was what seems to be a still more deeply rooted disposition for decentralized hegemony based on the ancient character of the society. For, as Cerulli has recently suggested, the origins of the Ethiopian state were such as to lay the foundation for a persisting order of feudalism. The movement of South Arabs to the Eritrean coast and highlands took place, not through the conquest of an indigenous population by a united invader, as in the Norman Conquest of England, but by the intermittent emigration and settlement of distinct tribes from South Arabia into various parts of the African territory. Thus, Cerulli concludes, we see in Ethiopia "a feudalism expanded from the roots: a number of principalities or peoples which, independent on African land after their emigration, have finally been regrouped in a higher political unity, yet still conserving in the feudal system thus constituted part of their autonomy and their individuality."[37] If this is so, it would constitute an added traditional element in the sense of legitimacy of local dynastic interests.

All this suggests that we must look to two sources for the prestige of the *makuānnent*—that recruitment into the secular elite came from "below" as well as from "above." These two bases of noble status are indicated by the etymology of two Amharic words commonly applied to the local nobility, *shum* and *bālābbāt*. *Shum* (or *seyum*) comes from a root which means to invest with high position. The emperor, as we have seen, is *seyuma egziābhēr* ("invested by God") and he in turn is the source of authority for investing other dignitaries. The status associated with the word *shum* is therefore based on the act of investiture by a sovereign. *Bālābbāt*, on the other hand, has the literal meaning, "one who has a father"; in other words, one who has a significant father, a notable ancestry. This status refers to claims to deference which are based on birth.

Claims based on birth, moreover, were closely tied to the ownership of land and supported by local territorial allegiances. This appears most strikingly in the office of *çhīqā shum*, the lowest level official, who is appointed, to be sure, but by the local people themselves from a small number of *bālābbāt* whose eligibility for the office rests on their inheritance of rights to certain specified pieces of land. Other local offices, like *malkaññā* and *meslanē*, were normally given by regional governors to *bālābbāt* indigenous to the area. The sacred sentiment of fealty to a monarch, whose charisma rested both on membership in a hallowed dynasty and the hallowed act of coronation, thus competed in Abyssinian souls with deeply felt sentiments of attachment to members of noted families who symbolized local rights and traditions. Abyssinian political structure at any given time was determined by the relative strength of the forces supported by these two principles of legitimacy.

Neither principle was ever realized in pure form. No matter how great his

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authority, the emperor could never afford to ignore the hereditary claims of regional *bālābbāt* in dispensing favors and making appointments. He needed a minimum of support from regional lords who commanded devoted followers, and he could not with impunity alienate any number of these at a given time. In practice, imperial favor was accorded *both* on the basis of personal loyalty and military ability, and of ascriptive claims to rank based on birth. The exercise of imperial authority was often a question simply of confirming the leadership of a locally successful *bālābbāt*.

With regard to regionally based strength, on the other hand, birth was not a sufficient factor to assure a man a high position. (It was not even necessary, strictly speaking. Any man could attempt to build up a position of power by attracting followers. He had a much better chance, however—a chance to attain authority, and not merely force—if he came from a noted family.) If, as the son of an important lord, he inherited his father's position, he had to prove himself a suitable leader or risk being deposed by the men of the area. At the very least he had to withstand competition from his brothers. Thus, as we saw in the history of Manz, two of Nagāssi's sons were deposed before the men of Manz found in Sebstē a leader worthy of his father's mantle. Military ability, political shrewdness, and lavish generosity toward one's followers were the decisive characteristics which, together with strong ambition, could enable the son of a *bālābbāt* to attract followers and make claims of his own. With adequate forces, he could even depose a regional governor and take his place, so long as he took possession of the official drum (*nagārit*) of the office.[88] For complete legitimation, however, it was usually necessary to secure confirmation of the rule of a locally successful *bālābbāt* by the emperor. This was the reason why Nagāssi is said to have journeyed to Gondar.

In terms of the distribution of political authority, then, Abyssinian history may be viewed as an oscillation between the emperor's efforts to define local nobles as his agents and their own efforts to attain continuity and autonomy. The available sources concerning the emperors of the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries suggest that their efforts were to a large extent successful. The ensuing "barbarian invasions" so weakened the empire that a more locally centered distribution of power became inevitable. At first only the scope of the monarchy was reduced, as the emperor came to govern a smaller area. In consequence, in outlying regions such as Manz, Gishē, and Merhābētē in northern Shoa, virtual sovereignty was wielded by the local *bālābbāt*. Nevertheless, for a good century after its founding Gondar served as a real imperial capital, and its emperors retained authority over the lords in their shrunken empire. Then, as the monarchy began its inexorable decline due to internal rivalries and the movement of Galla into court and capital, localism triumphed. Ethiopia's Age of the Princes (1769–1855) was as decentralized a political system as was twelfth-century France or fourteenth-century Japan.

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innumerable gifts and services from the rank and file of the peasantry. Differences normally arose only when the secular powers deviated from what were generally the established norms. Thus, certain extremes of exploitation were on occasion strongly condemned by the clergy—usually the monks—as were certain transgressions of Christian custom by the secular powers, including at times the emperor himself. Amdä Ṣeyon (1314–44), for example, was publicly rebuked, early in his reign, for having seduced one of his father's concubines and two of his own sisters. More generally, the clergy tended to react against flagrant misbehavior on the part of the military—such as looting the homes of those giving them quarter, or violating the right of asylum.

The extent to which the religious and secular powers stood in economic conflict seems to have depended largely on the amount of land available at any given time. Both groups were interested in the acquisition of rights to land revenues. The rights of the church to land are anchored in a traditional agreement, attributed to Yekuno Amlāk (1270–85), according to which the church was to receive one-third of the land in the realm. It is clear that the holdings of the church grew progressively larger from that time to the sixteenth century. With the subsequent diminution of Abyssinian territory and related social disorganization, the church's claim to its lands was not so scrupulously respected. Thus, Barradas observed that the emperors of the seventeenth century were as anxious to regain lands from the church for distribution to their soldiers as those of previous centuries had been generous in presenting them, while Takla Hāymānot decreed in 1771 that "all lands and villages, which are now or have been given to the Abuna by the King, shall revert to the King's own use."[81] Tēwodros, too, was anxious to recapture as much land as he could from the church. Later in the nineteenth century, however, as Menelik carried out his great territorial expansion, the church systematically acquired one-fourth of all lands in the annexed areas.

In general, it may be said that the clergy and nobility worked to further each other's interests. The nobility supported the clergy by giving endowments to churches and monasteries, setting up churches in newly conquered lands, and observing religious ceremonies as state functions. The clergy, in turn, served secular authority by providing a communications network for relaying and supporting official policies, excommunicating enemies, and providing counsel and morale in connection with military expeditions. Altogether, there was an easy commerce between the two elites. They felt common cause in their responsibilities and privileges vis-à-vis the masses. Occasionally there was even an exchange of personnel, when warlords ended their careers by becoming monks, or clerics acceded to high civil positions, like the Rās of Angot, for example, who in Alvares' time was an ordained priest.

When expectations of mutual support were not satisfied, however, conflict

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792 793 643 578 [175] did erupt between the secular and religious powers. In that event both groups had recourse to powerful weapons: the former, violence; the latter, excommunication. The history of Ethiopia records numerous instances of the flogging or execution of clergy by secular authorities. The action of Fāsiladas (1632–67), who reportedly "caused seven thousand priests to be thrown headlong from the top of the mountain Balbau for having revolted against him,"[82] would represent but one of the more extreme instances of such violent retribution. Short of violence, the kings at least had other means at their disposal for controlling the clergy: the power to withhold benefices, the right to imprison church officials, the final authority on doctrinal questions, and the ability to block a united front on the part of the clergy by pitting high church officials against each other.

792 793 578 On the other hand, infringement on the rights of churches and monasteries, gross civil injustice, or radical departure from religious tradition could on occasion evoke surprisingly effective retaliation by the clergy. D'Abbadie provides some extremely illuminating passages on this matter, from which the following have been extracted:

> More than once have I been present at debates of this nature; I have seen these men of the church, weak and without arms amidst men of war, pleading in the name of the law, indicting the menacing covetousness of the surrounding soldiery, invoking eloquently reprobation against their powerful adversaries, and leading them to disavow themselves that force which constituted their pride. . . .
>
> In the case of an open violation of an asylum, the regular clergy got aroused; the most venerable monks abandoned their solitude, assembled the pariah clergy, went into the camps, and generally they obtained justice. When the real culprit was the Dajāzmātch, they brought him to repentance, or else excommunicated him, threatened his servants with anathema if they continued to serve him, put the province under interdict and, aided by the monks of the neighboring provinces, stirred up national reprobation against him.[83]

792 793 578 643 The clergy had other resources which it could employ against the emperor himself. It could influence royal policy through highly placed advisers. Through the *abuna* it could exact certain promises from a prospective emperor as a condition of coronation. Perhaps most important, the clergy could, through its hold over public opinion, turn the populace against the sovereign. As we have seen, this power proved decisive in the encounters between church and monarch in the reigns of Za Dengel and Susneyos, and contributed significantly to the downfall of Tēwodros and Līj Iyāsu.

643 792 793 While therefore the emperor may well have been "supreme in all causes, ecclesiastical and civil," he was far from being the sole, or even the decisive,

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source of the influence enjoyed by the clergy. The latter constituted a largely autonomous status group which no emperor could afford to antagonize indefinitely. The attempt to build a more powerful central government and introduce cultural reforms thus required some alteration of their independent status as well as that of the old nobility.

THE FEUDAL ORDER IN TRANSITION

The Decline of the Old Nobility

It must always have been the policy of the Ethiopian emperors, except for those few who did not relish the political side of their office, to seek to maximize their control over the regional nobility. They did this, we have seen, either by granting land, power, and rank to men who were completely dependent on them, or else by controlling, through military and diplomatic means, those lords whose birthright and regional strength gave them strong claims to their positions.

During the past century, however, the idea of subordinating regional nobles to imperial control has come to be conceived more radically and has become the core of a slowly emerging ideal of a modern nation-state. Some such vision was certainly behind the tortuous career of Tēwodros II, whose policy was a reaction against the desperate disunity which the Age of the Princes brought to Abyssinia and to the growing threat from foreign powers. In Plowden's official report to the British government in 1853, he described Tēwodros' work as follows:

> The arduous task of breaking the power of the great feudal chiefs—a task achieved in Europe only during the reigns of many consecutive kings—he has commenced by chaining almost all who were dangerous, avowing his intention of liberating them when his power shall be consolidated. He has placed soldiers of the different provinces under the command of his own trusty followers, to whom he has given high titles, but no power to judge or punish: thus, in fact, creating generals in place of feudal chieftains, more proud of their birth than of their monarch, and organising a new nobility—a legion of honour dependent on himself, and chosen specially for their daring and fidelity.[84]

The task of displacing the great feudal chiefs proved to be scarcely less arduous in Ethiopia than in Europe, however. Tēwodros' high hopes were shattered against the opposing forces of regional ambitions and clerical disaffection. The national unity he won through conquest and reform did not survive to the end of his reign.

Yohānnes IV (1871–89) likewise aimed at uniting the nation, but was distracted from serious internal reform by the need to fight off the encroach-

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ments of Egyptians, Mahdists, and Europeans. His domestic policy was more concerned with the imposition of religious uniformity than with political transformation.

Menelik revived Tēwodros' policy of creating a band of generals loyal only to himself. He did this partly by raising capable men with no connections to high position: Rās Gobānā and Fitāwrāri Hābta Giyorgis, two of his most important generals, were originally Galla prisoners. The power of the feudal chieftains he manipulated by traditional techniques, sending them to posts far removed from their home bases, and arranging political marriages. But Menelik did not decisively undercut the authority of the great provincial lords, and at his death the old political structure was still more or less intact.

The experience of these emperors was not forgotten by Haile Selassie, who seems to have made it his primary and unceasing ambition to assure his position by breaking down every sort of autonomous power where it previously existed or threatened to develop. Thanks to his policies of centralization and to modern means of transport and communication he was able to become more of an effective autocrat than any of his predecessors.

The main development during the period of his regency as Rās Tafari (1917–28) was the stiffening of his military posture. To start with he had the regional forces of Harar Province, formerly his father's governorship, which he had acquired through the favor of Empress Taitu (Menelik's wife) following Menelik's paralysis. He built up his strength by making improvements in Harar that increased his revenues and the number of his soldiers, and acquired fiefs elsewhere. Following the death of Empress Zauditu's commander of the imperial troops in 1926, he took command of these troops and brought some of his own forces into Addis Ababa. By 1928 he was strong enough to demand the title of *negus* from Zauditu and, as is well known, acceded as emperor upon her death two years later.

During these years Rās Tafari was gradually promoting the idea of a transformation of the position of the old nobility. As early as 1926 a letter published in his weekly newspaper, *Berhānennā Salām*, suggested that the prevailing feudal system of provincial government be replaced by a system based on salaried administrators.[88] An actual change of that order was out of the question at that time. A contemporary American observer thus described some of the obstacles:

> Ras Hailu of Gojjam, Ras Guksah, chief of Amhara, Dejasmatch Ayalu, powerful head of Simien, Dejasmatch Gabra Salassy of Tigre, and Ras Kassa of Shoa, are supreme lords in the rough highlands of the north country. Far removed from the central authority, thirty to forty days' journey, some of them, they are out of touch—living in a different world from that of Addis Ababa. Hundreds of lesser chiefs rally to their standards, each

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with his numerous following. In the South it is the same and we heard that Dejasmatch Balcha . . . ruling thousands of square miles and no one knows how many subjects with a hand of iron, pays no taxes, no tribute, no share in the upkeep of government. It is common talk that he has been summoned to Addis Ababa upon more than one occasion and has sent back the reply: "If you want me, come down here into Sidamo and get me."[84]

The most that Rās Tafari could do to realize his political ambitions then was to work patiently within the existing structure, attempting whenever possible to fill the posts of provincial governors with men of his own.

After his coronation, Haile Selassie continued to be faced by considerable opposition from provincial lords. The governors of Tigre and Gojjam were particularly troublesome, and some nobles from those regions joined their lots to the Italian cause during the occupation. Not until the restoration was Haile Selassie able to effectuate policies which would strip the old nobility of their autonomy once and for all.

Three major innovations of the years after 1941 accomplished this end. One was the establishment of a standing military force under the Emperor's direct control that rendered the existence of separate regional armies unnecessary and possessed a capability clearly superior to that of any force a rebellious lord might muster. This included the national army, trained for a number of years by a British mission; and the Imperial Bodyguard, reestablished after the liberation on a new and expanded basis. These troops monopolized the modern weapons in the country and the limited air power, later developed into a separate air force. In a short time there appeared a new class of military officers, trained with modern techniques, and living as salaried employees of the government. The traditional function of the noble as military commander was thus made obsolete.

Second, under a governmental decree of 1942 a new fiscal system was set up under the Ministry of Finance. In this system the peasants have been obliged to pay a fixed quota of taxes in money, for which they are given a written receipt (*kārnē*). These taxes are collected by employees of the Ministry of Finance and transmitted directly to the provincial capitals or to Addis Ababa. This has been a popular reform among the peasantry, who are no longer required to submit arbitrary amounts of goods and labor to their district rulers. For the nobility, however, it means that their legitimate income is restricted to what they produce on their own lands, the rents they receive from their tenants, and—if they hold office—to what they receive from the government as a monthly salary; though in practice it continues to be supplemented, in many cases, by bribes and illegally imposed fees. Thus, they can no longer support a significant number of followers.

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directed peasantry, and suffer the consequences, no dynamic program of agricultural and social development can take place in Abyssinian areas that does not enlist the active cooperation of the local *bälābbāt* and *shum*.*

The Decline of the Clergy

Although the church was instrumental in bringing Rās Tafari to power—by relieving the nobles of their oath of allegiance to Līj Iyāsu—it was as a whole not sympathetic to his policy once he began to rule. Foremost champions of tradition, the clergy viewed with suspicion Rās Tafari's interest in modern education and other reforms. So pronounced was their conservatism that his weekly *Berhānennā Salām* found it newsworthy to report the fact that the clergy of one important provincial church were actually reading the Addis Ababa newspaper each week.[97] He was wise to act gingerly at first, limiting ecclesiastical reform to such matters as publishing religious texts in Ge'ez and Amharic, and encouraging the work of foreign missionaries.

In the past three decades, however, changes of many sorts have had the effect of reducing the degree of independent authority which the clergy traditionally enjoyed. These changes included the achievement of independence from the Alexandrian Patriarchate; the weakening of the church under the Italian occupation; subjection of church administration to the central government; and competition from the secular government schools.

Rās Tafari initiated the policy of seeking independence from Alexandria in 1929, when he secured the investiture of five Ethiopian bishops. This gave indigenous clergy, for the first time, the right to ordain priests and deacons, although they remained subordinate to the Egyptian archbishop. In 1950 an Ethiopian bishop, the *eçhagē*, was consecrated as archbishop; and in 1958, culminating Haile Selassie's patient and skillful negotiations, complete autonomy from Alexandria was achieved.

The attainment of ecclesiastical independence has heightened the prestige of national church officials in Ethiopia. It has brought about a re-organization of the national church hierarchy, in which fifteen bishops now hold office, one for each of the fourteen provinces, and one in Jerusalem. At the same time it has reduced the effective freedom of the clergy as a separate status group. Deprived of the external source of legitimacy which the Egyptian *abuna* formerly provided, the clergy are now entirely subordinated to the power of the Emperor. This condition was formally articulated in the Constitution of 1955, which made the election and appointment of archbishops and bishops

* A potentially significant medium of communication between them and the central government is the Chamber of Deputies, which since 1957 has brought popularly elected notables from the provinces to Addis Ababa.

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"subject to the approval of the Emperor" and gave him "the right to promulgate the decrees, edicts, and public regulations of the Church, except those concerning monastic life and other spiritual administrations."

The general position of the church had already been weakened by the events of the Italian occupation. Italian policy resulted in the destruction of many church buildings and the massacre of numerous monks, including those of the hallowed monastery of Dabra Libānos. Of the national leaders, the Egyptian *abuna* was out of the country from 1937 on; two of the bishops were put to death, including the much venerated martyr, Abuna Pēṭros;* and the remaining two compounded the demoralization by openly supporting the invaders. One of these went so far as to anathematize resistance fighters and forbade Ethiopian priests to give Christian burial to those who died as patriots. In some areas, moreover, it is said that the local clergy lost much prestige by welcoming the invader with open arms.

Haile Selassie thus had a much stronger hand in his dealings with the clergy when he returned from exile in 1941. The next year he issued a decree which sharply restricted the perquisites of the local clergy. Their landed properties were no longer tax free, but now carried the obligation to pay taxes at the normal rate into a central church treasury. The church was deprived of temporal jurisdiction over its ordained and lay members, including the authority to inflict fines, and was denied the right to corvée labor from peasants living on their lands. (In practice these latter restrictions of authority are frequently ignored in the provinces.)

The development of a nationwide system of government schools, finally, has broken the clergy's monopoly of educational facilities. Wherever government schools have invaded traditional Abyssinian regions, the clergy tend to be defensive and resentful. The specific issues have been the decreased prestige of certain traditional religious subjects, which are not taught in these schools, and the comparatively lower income of church teachers. Thus, a full-time teacher of reading attached to a monastery may receive Eth$15 a month from the central church treasury, whereas a government school teacher in the same area teaching the same subject may earn Eth$150 a month.

Despite all these blows, the clergy still retain much the same prestige as ever in the provinces. Their influence over public opinion is considerable, and has been a major factor in discouraging families in traditional Christian areas like Manz from sending their children to government schools.† Despite

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* A statue of Abuna Pēṭros has been raised in the center of Addis Ababa. His fate has been celebrated in the verse drama by Makonnen Endālkātchaw, *Ya-dam Demṭs*, translated into English as *The Voice of Blood* by Endālkātchaw Makonnen.

† When the Ethiopian government is ready to inaugurate a major program of provincial education, it should not prove difficult to overcome this opposition. A number of provincial priests, with whom the author has discussed this matter, have signified their willingness to serve as

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The households are staffed with numerous servants and retainers, who make certain, for example, that the lord does not work in the garden or carry a package into the house from his car. Expectations of this sort of attendance are carried with the new nobility wherever they go. Similarly, members of the new nobility are frequently followed about, or waited for, by young relatives and other aspiring young men, who hope to establish a sort of civil master-retainer relationship and thereby secure a position, promotion, or loan.

The new nobility also attempts to instill in its children the refined manners and reserve of the old noble subculture. Some of the wealthiest have retained the tradition of private education, in its modern counterpart of sending their children abroad for secondary school or to private schools in Addis Ababa. They would like to control their children in the old fashion, but because of growing cultural confusion have in many cases assumed a more permissive stance. Thus their children increasingly run about freely, ignore traditions, and exhibit less fastidious manners.

Owing to their small numbers and the fact that they meet one another so often—at the palace and at social events like weddings—the members of the new nobility tend to be well acquainted with each other. They seem conscious of their status as a privileged stratum but do not form a solidary group. They divide into strongly competitive cliques, a division that itself tends to dissolve into the anxious struggle of each to maintain or improve his position at the expense of the others. The chief way to accomplish this has been to report something incriminating about another person—above all, something that impugns his loyalty to the Emperor. The consciousness of the new nobility has been dominated by the fear of arousing the Emperor's displeasure. The proximity of the throne—a phone call can summon anyone to report to the palace within ten minutes, reason unspecified—makes this a more formidable sanction than in previous generations.

How has Haile Selassie been able to prevent the new nobility from acquiring that relative autonomy of status and self-esteem which the old nobility formerly enjoyed? Why is it, despite the burgeoning of a new "power elite," that the question most earnestly asked by thoughtful Ethiopians and foreign observers for the past several years concerns a probable future "power vacuum"?

Sensitive to encroachment on his "absolute" authority by anyone else, Haile Selassie has kept his officials in a state of weakness through the strategy of his appointments. In this he has been inspired by the traditional methods of Abyssinian rulers who periodically assigned offices to different men through the process of *shum-shir*. Haile Selassie's policy has been to rotate officials in office every one or two years, in some cases after six months. This has prevented officials from acquiring a significant following in any one position. At the same time it has made certain that none of them will undertake any

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178 631 64 565 program not supervised by the Emperor, since any official's budding projects tend to be undone by his successor, whether because of personal vendetta, orders from the Emperor himself, or simply difference of approach. Thus has Haile Selassie been able to make sure that no one besides himself demonstrates any sort of leadership that might be attractive to the public.

At the same time his appointments have been made in such a way as to insure a balance of power—or impotence—favorable to his absolute control. By consistently appointing enemies to adjacent positions he has built in checks upon the behavior and sentiments of his higher officials. He has relied on mutual jealousies and conflicting ambitions to cause each to report anything incriminating he can find on the other. When appointees in the same branch of government have shown undue co-operation and friendliness, he has at times provoked friction between them.

In addition to the checks and balances of the *shum-shir* system, the Emperor has made use of an extensive intelligence system to keep watch over those in office and out. Not only the operations of the regular security depart- [625] ments of the Ministry of Interior and the police, but also some of his closer advisers have had their own personal networks, financed by moneys diverted from various government departments.

178 565 656 472 Other measures have been used to check the independence of businessmen. Money has been arbitrarily taken from them by the imposition of fines, confiscation of property, and through requests for contributions for charitable causes. A few private entrepreneurs who have been too successful have been forced into government service. Licenses have been revoked, in some cases given to foreigners rather than to prosperous Ethiopians. Dividends from commercial enterprises have been withheld, or given to others whom the Emperor favored. (Rather than appear unduly wealthy, some Ethiopian investors have preferred to use Greeks, Armenians, and Arabs as the nominal heads of their enterprises.)

178 565 554 [177] [829] Due to their relative proximity to the Emperor, their patronage powers, their wealth, and in some cases their family background, the members of the new nobility command considerable deference, particularly in Addis Ababa. Their Westernized style of life (itself modeled to a great extent on the Emperor's habits) has set new standards for modernizing Ethiopia. At the same time they are the objects of much stereotyped hostility. The people in the country, and the commoners of the towns, regard them as oppressive and unsympathetic. Their logic often runs: "The big men around the court are no good; only the Emperor is for us." The intellectuals see them as reactionary, selfish, and corrupt. The massacre of some fifteen members of the new nobility as the final act of the abortive coup d'état in 1960 was an expression of this latter judgment.

178 565 593 643 662 The chief advantage of the new nobility—their relative enjoyment of im-

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perial favor—has also been their great dilemma. Those who have been conscientious in seeking to carry out their proper responsibilities have been torn by the need to do what they regard as improper in order not to incur the disfavor of the sovereign. Those with narrowly opportunistic motives have been rendered no less uneasy by the need to counter the offensives of their enemies at court.

This dilemma and the related "immorality" is a natural consequence of Ethiopia's attempt to begin modernization under a traditional despotic authority. The behavior of the new nobility that is so bitterly attacked by the intellectuals will continue to reproduce itself until the process of modernization renders it obsolete—until the specialized standards which control economic and governmental activities have been firmly institutionalized, with controls that operate independent of expressions of loyalty to the sovereign.

Standards of competence have been more firmly institutionalized in the case of a special group among the new men of power—members of the military profession. The officers corps should in fact be considered as an elite group in its own right, in view of its distinct status and functions as well as the size and political importance of Ethiopia's security forces. The regular armed forces number nearly thirty thousand; there are also an estimated twenty thousand men in the police force and an unknown number in the recently reactivated territorial armies. The number of men with the rank of major or equivalent and above is thus probably close to a thousand.

Ethiopian military officers are recipients of the special esteem their countrymen have always felt toward men of war. They have also acquired prestige from the military's efforts to defend and liberate the country during the Italian period and more recently for their backstopping of Ethiopia's claims on the Somali border. They have at the same time been objects of an undercurrent of civilian hostility, based on the feeling that they are "parasites" and doing nothing positive to enrich the country. Their style of life lends itself readily to provoking the latter sort of objection. While dissatisfaction over income on the part of non-commissioned military personnel has been a major source of tension in Ethiopia during the past decade, the perquisites of higher officers compare quite favorably with those of their civilian counterparts. They have been given substantial salaries—and in addition, free housing, free cars, and servants and retainers drawn from the rank and file. Keeping in mind his particular need to insure the loyalty of the military elite, the Emperor has furthermore presented personal gifts to individual officers directly from time to time.

As a result of intimate contact with European and American personnel who have trained them in Ethiopia, experience abroad as trainees or in United Nations military missions, and the emphasis on rationalization inherent in the modern military profession, members of the military elite tend to be

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phenomenon, however, the intellectuals are already unmistakably in evidence, and if one contrasts them as a social stratum with the new nobility their outlines become readily visible.

The new nobility came into being in consequence of Haile Selassie's policy of political *centralisation*. The status of its members rests on their possession of political influence, measured partly by the strength of their personal followings but primarily by how close they are to the Emperor, and on the Westernized style of life made possible by wealth acquired through political office, rents, and commerce. Its ascendance as a status group may be located approximately in the decade after 1945, the year in which failure of a revolt in Tigre Province marked the end of attempts to assert provincial claims inspired by allegiance to members of the old nobility. The decade was marked by rapid growth of the factors supportive of centralized government and the new nobility: expansion of the bureaucracy, strengthening of the national military force, and economic advance.*

The intelligentsia, by contrast, has come into being in consequence of Haile Selassie's policy of technical *modernization*. The status of its members rests on their possession of secular Western education, status differences within the group depending on the academic degree attained and the prestige of the school attended. The development of the intelligentsia as a counter-elite has its beginnings in the present decade, beginning around 1955, the year of the jubilee celebration of the twenty-fifth Anniversary of the Emperor's coronation. This was a lavishly contrived affair which, occurring at about the time that the first sizable group of postwar college students had returned from abroad, accentuated in their minds a sense of alienation from the *ancien régime*. The present decade is marked by dramatic increase in the number of Ethiopians with college degrees and secondary school certificates, and in the general prestige of education as such in the country. For, it will be remembered, in the late forties the government found it necessary to pay families to get them to send their children to school; whereas by the late fifties, there were far too many applicants for the available places.

The pattern of recruitment of members of the new nobility has been continuous with important elements of the traditional social system. It rests on the belief in the sanctity of the emperor and the legitimacy of his unlimited political authority, and the practice of emperors sometimes to raise to high position men of low background who were *ipso facto* more trustworthy. The personnel of the new nobility, moreover, have in a number of cases been drawn from members of old noble families.

By contrast, the formation of the intelligentsia represents a break with the

* Due largely to trade in coffee, whose export value climbed more or less steadily from Eth$17 million in 1947 to Eth$123 million in 1957.

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FIG. 32.—*Haile Selassie as a boy with his father, Rās Makonnen*

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FIG. 33.—*The Emperor attending a ceremony at the University College*

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11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

the Amharic phrase *ya-ḳantu weddāsē zaman*—"the era of futile flattery."

For, whatever other aspects of modern culture they have identified with, the locals and returnees are seized with the promise of its first principle: dynamism.[68] Should they join forces, among themselves and with each other, they might create the effective intelligentsia which is indispensable for realizing this dynamism in action. They would play complementary, and equally necessary, parts; the locals contributing their greater drive and closeness to traditional society, the returnees their broader perspective and skepticism toward simplistic answers and total reforms.

There are numerous obstacles to such a progressive development. Some of them represent the persistence among the intellectuals of a number of traditional pan-Abyssinian characteristics which inhibit both the exercise of creative leadership and the capacity for solidary action. The traditional context of these characteristics will be discussed in the chapters which follow. The most conspicuous obstacle, however, has been the manner in which the Ethiopian government has sought to integrate the intellectuals in the social system. This is the subject to which we now turn.

The Role of the Government

In the hierarchy of values which sustained the traditional Abyssinian social order, that of the transcendental religious orientation represented by the Orthodox Church may be said to have held the paramount position. This is the sense in which, as has so often been remarked, religion has been Abyssinia's only truly unifying factor throughout the centuries. Religious charisma transferred from foreign sanctuaries—the mythical Ark of the Covenant brought from Jerusalem and the archbishop periodically imported from Egypt—provided the ultimate source of legitimacy in the society, upholding the authority of a sacred Christian monarch, church-defending warlords, and a numerous and functionally differentiated clergy. It so penetrated the social system that the basic unit of Abyssinian civil life was in fact a religious one, the parish.

In retrospect it would seem that the most profound aspect of Haile Selassie's accomplishment has been to dislodge the transcendental religious value from highest place and to replace it with the system-integrative value of loyalty to the emperor.[69] His mission has been above all a secularizing one. To accomplish it he has had greatly to increase his political and economic resources; but insofar as his regime has been accepted, and not based exclusively on sheer power—which to some extent is certainly the case—the paramount value in Ethiopia under Haile Selassie has become loyalty to the emperor as a symbol of the whole society. The autonomous significance of the church has been reduced; its extra-Ethiopian source of charisma has been cut off, and its func-

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tion has been more closely than ever tied to the service and support of the Crown.

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The system-integrative value was not only subordinate to transcendental religious values in the traditional order, but it was also in competition with the separate instrumental orientations of the feudal lords. This introduced the chief instability of the traditional system. Commitment to the separate goals of the feudal lords chronically competed with that of loyalty to the emperor; and after the calamities of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the former decisively gained the upper hand. With the ascendance of the system-integrative value under Haile Selassie, accordingly, the semi-autonomous status of feudal nobles could no longer be tolerated, and their powers and functions were sharply reduced.

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In their stead, but as arms of the emperor and living symbols of allegiance to him, a new nobility was established as the focus of national power and prestige. New goals were pronounced for the system as a whole, but integrative considerations of loyalty remained decisive: no system goals were pursued which threatened to disrupt the internal security of the regime. Finally,

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a generation of young men was trained in skills that would provide sufficient technical competence to provide amenities and façades to edify the emperor and his courtiers as well as to increase the nation's military strength, standard of living, and international prestige. The integrative strategy in dealing with educated Ethiopians has consistently been one of exploiting their skills without permitting the values represented by them—technical competence and national development—to be fully actualized; to make them, in effect, appendages of the court just as much as the new nobility.

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Haile Selassie has sought to do this by maintaining a paternalistic relationship with the intellectuals. Government pronouncements stress that whatever advantages Ethiopians have had by way of education have resulted from his personal generosity. The Emperor has sought to make visible his paternal solicitation and bounty, for example, by visits to various secondary schools and colleges, and by sending them baskets of fruit on occasion. He has personally conferred the diplomas to all graduates of the University College. Similarly, Ethiopian students who have returned from study abroad have normally been expected to have an audience with the Emperor, in which their occupational plans are discussed and they are given some fatherly advice from the throne. The following excerpts from typical audiences of this nature were reported in the *Ethiopian Herald*.

[A speech by a returnee]:

Your Imperial Majesty!

I feel honoured and privileged to speak on behalf of my fellow students expressing our deep gratitude to Your Imperial Majesty. . . .

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> Thanks to the untiring endeavour of Your Imperial Majesty in the field of education, we now have not only elementary and secondary schools throughout the country but also different higher educational institutions providing the youth of our country with higher education. Besides this, competent students are selected and sent abroad for specialization, as a result of which the number of Ethiopian students in foreign countries is increasing. Those of us who are now standing before Your Imperial Majesty are only a few among those who have been given such an opportunity. . . .
>
> Your Imperial Majesty's struggle is to enable Ethiopia to benefit from the advantages of modern education in order to improve the standard of living of Your people so that Ethiopia will play adequately its part in the international community. Consequently, the public services that are rendered in the reign of Your Imperial Majesty are enormously great compared with the past. This can be seen easily by the number of ministries and other government agencies established by Your Imperial Majesty. . . .[84]
>
> [A reply by the Emperor]:
>
> We have been deeply touched by what you have said on behalf of the returned students. From you, We expect devotion to your country and your Emperor. . . . Endeavour to profit your country from the fruits of your education. Men are in great need today. It is not enough to be labeled as "man"—one must be worthy of the name by being of use to the community. This is the real test of education.
>
> You must get in intimate touch with the cultural heritage of your country. Familiarise yourselves with the modes of life from which you must have been estranged naturally by your absence. You must endeavour to purge yourselves gradually of alien influence in your daily lives, and so God help you.[85]

This sort of paternal relation has served not only to promote the loyalty of his educated "children" but also to check mild cases of dissidence. Grown men with sophisticated technical training who may have voiced some critical sentiments have been called in for mild reproof: "Why have you behaved thus? Did We not always bring you fruit and other things when you were at school?"

Such a policy was no doubt viable when Ethiopians with secondary education numbered in the hundreds, but it becomes increasingly implausible as the Emperor's family of educated youth multiplies into thousands. No less relevant to its long-run futility is the fact that knowledge, unlike wealth and political position, is an inalienable possession. Their knowledge gives Western-educated Ethiopians a kind of independence of the Emperor that is lacking in most of the new nobility, and that perhaps may be compared to the private armies of the feudal lords or the power of excommunication held by the church. It was awareness of this that prompted one returnee to say: "The Emperor will have to learn that our education is not a plaything he can turn on or off as he pleases."

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But this gentle, paternal control has been backstopped by more rigorous sanctions. Censorship controls assure that anything that is published is highly flattering of the government. Intelligence networks keep intellectuals from speaking their minds and developing them through open exchange with others. Associations have in general not been permitted to form, or else have been saturated with government informers. Coupled with these repressive measures has been the policy of making appointments dependent on the extent to which one curries favor with the Emperor directly, or one of the new nobles who is high in favor at a given time. The intellectuals, no less than the new nobility, have been kept in line by *shum-shĭr* and *divide et impera*. "We have been kept from acting," said one remorseful returnee, "by fear and the sweetness of office."

In the political order sustained by the rule of Haile Selassie, the paramountcy of loyalty to the imperial government as a value has precluded the ascendance of values of national development and technical competence, values it is the peculiar burden of the intelligentsia to bear and assert. In this situation a vicious cycle of mutual mistrust has developed between the government and the intellectuals. Although the articulation of standards and the expression of criticism are important functions of intellectuals, the Emperor has tended to regard all expressions of criticism which reflect on the government, which is his personal government, as expressions of filial ingratitude at best, and at worst as signs of subversion. The intellectuals, in turn, have accepted this definition of the situation and have tended to assume—after some disheartening experiences in the course of the fifties—that is was not plausible for them to express criticism in a framework of basic loyalty to the regime. Distrust fed distrust, and antagonism mounted. The abortive coup d'état of December, 1960, was but the most outspoken and violent expression of this.

This growth of antagonism to the government has seeped down among the students. The feeling has become increasingly widespread among students at home and abroad that genuine service to the nation and the performance of technical functions are incompatible with a loyal and secure existence under the present regime. Thus, one student in a Western country said in 1961: "I am afraid to return to Ethiopia. I fear that I shall either lose all my principles, as so many of my friends seem to have done, or that I shall end up without a job or in prison."

ETHIOPIA'S DILEMMA

Haile Selassie has often proclaimed his devotion to a program of modernization. His personal achievements in this direction have been substantial: the establishment of much modern bureaucratic machinery, the institution of a parliament and electoral procedures, a mild degree of industrialization, and, above all, the provision of a modern secular education for thousands of young people.

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people. He has been the procreator of much of what demand for modernization now exists in the country, although the Italian colonial administration must also be credited for a certain amount of this demand. By the fifties, however, the growth of the demand of modernization had become self-sustaining, if only in a relatively small part of the population. At that point Haile Selassie was unwilling, or at least unable, to take the next step, to raise national development higher in the societal value hierarchy than loyalty to the Crown. Thus, a traditional oligarchy has been maintained, in which the development of a self-respecting modern intelligentsia has been effectively restrained and its decisive ascendance as a new elite has been prevented.

The paramount sociological problem in Ethiopia in the coming decades concerns whether or not this pattern will be broken. There is no guarantee that it will be. It is highly thinkable that the opportunists among the intellectuals will be absorbed into the new nobility and that a new oligarchy will entrench itself and maintain its exclusive position by increased repression.[68] The number of young people being given secondary and college education will continue to be limited to a diminutive percentage, and the deeply rooted sentiments of the mass of the population for a regime of traditional oligarchy will not be offended. Economic development will proceed at a snail's pace, and what additional wealth is produced will flow into the pockets of a small minority. One possible outcome of such an eventuality would be that the modernizing infrastructure of the society would grow increasingly restless, culminating in a revolution which installed a modernizing oligarchy.

Alternatively, modernizing forces already unleashed in the country may gather momentum and sustain a gradual breakthrough of the new order. If one were to credit the reports of many who have spoken with the Emperor at first hand, this would be his desire. But far more than imperial approval of a distant ideal is required for it to become reality. Two conditions, above all, would be essential. One is that the systematic, if unwitting, demoralization of the intellectuals would have to be ended. Some sphere would have to be created in which universalistic standards have full sway, in which a modernizing intelligentsia can maintain and develop standards and transmit them to younger elements. The most obvious way to do this would be through a university which, by guaranteed financial support, independence from political pressures, and determined operation at a high standard, could provide the Ethiopian government and people with the technical and executive intelligentsia needed for effective modernization, and could provide an environment in which a corps of "custodians of the public good," loyal to the regime but free to express criticism, might be developed. The program for such a university was carefully drawn up by the planners of the Haile Selassie I University. It remains to be seen whether the opposition which muffled that program shortly after its inception, in the spring of 1962, was motivated primarily by

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ORALITY AND MODERNIZATION

121 155 571 The preoccupation with orality which appears in their traditional orientations has not disappeared among those Abyssinians who have acquired a modern education. In some respects, that experience has tended to intensify it. A state of prolonged dependence was institutionalized in the government school system. The hiring of most educated Ethiopians by the government has meant that most of them live in a position of waiting to receive their salary—or *ǐnjarā*, as they themselves put it—from the central authority. Thus the image of a bountiful father-figure has become the more firmly established. [643] While in his own person the Emperor has projected an image of vigorous leadership, he has at the same time taken pains to promote this old pattern of oral dependence, by sending gifts of food to students and of champagne to educated officials when they marry; by continuing to provide politically relevant feasts at the palace; and, like the traditional Amhara father-feeder, by frequently reminding his subjects that everything they have they owe to him. This pattern is replicated to some extent in the relations between members of the new nobility and their younger relatives and retainers.

Part of the self-reproach of some of the modern-educated Ethiopians is directed against this passive, receptive aspect of their motivational orientation. Their criticism says in effect: instead of drafting proposals to reform our departments, teaching or writing in order to educate our countrymen, or seeking to understand better the complexities of Ethiopia's current situation, we are far more likely to be found sitting about drinking coffee in our offices, sipping beer at some hotel, playing chess, savoring felicitous phrases, and going to parties where eating and drinking are invariably the main order of business.

Insofar as they are moved to take a more active approach to their situation, moreover, their effectiveness is blocked by a tendency to fall into the tradi- [578] tional oral aggressive patterns of behavior. Their manner of criticizing the government, or certain officials, is frequently one of wholesale insulting. When confronted by a difficult problem, whenever they do not fall back to [521] a posture of dependence on superiors, they incline toward argumentation, *čhǐqečhǐq*, backbiting, and mutual incrimination. Experts in debate, they are unaccustomed to the arts of creative discussion.

121 155 It is not my intention to suggest that the phenomena examined in this chapter are in total conflict with the Ethiopians' search for leadership. Many aspects of Amhara orality are not in the least inconsistent with the demands of a modernizing culture. Many aspects of Amhara orality would appear to be of enduring value—the excellence in debate and the appreciation of literary subtlety, the preparation of fine feasts and the enjoyment of the table. And it is not necessary for a very large number of Amhara to change their

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tion has prompted the hasty erection of new self-justificatory defenses and an extreme touchiness about being considered "primitive" or "backward." This sensitivity has been exacerbated by the fact that European politicians in pursuit of their colonial interests, and foreign journalists in pursuit of sensational stories, have shown no compunctions about dwelling on and exaggerating some of the more unflattering aspects of Ethiopian culture. In such an emotional climate, the attempt to be objective about one's country and one's self, to engage in self-examination that is both sympathetic and critical, can be carried out only by efforts that are profoundly heroic.

The situation has scarcely been improved, moreover, by the form taken by the "cult of the individual" in contemporary Ethiopia. The centralization of power has been accompanied by a radical centralization of prestige. The cult of personality occasioned by the ascendance of Haile Selassie overshadows all public life in Ethiopia. It is manifest in the ubiquitous photographs; the naming of countless streets, plazas, schools, and other institutions after him; and in the unremitting praise and adulation accorded him in all public speeches and mass media. Other individuals have normally been accorded recognition only by virtue of their proximity to him, while individuals possessing attainments in their own right, and thus some claim to public attention, have deliberately been kept in the shadows. Domestic news conveyed through the press and radio has largely consisted of the minutiae of the Emperor's daily activities, including such matters as the exact time at which he performs any public function and all the words he speaks on any occasion. This cult of personality has further been advanced in the Ethiopian press by its adherence to a number of conventions respecting the person of the Emperor, such as that of placing the name of the Emperor at the beginning of any article in which he is mentioned; capitalizing all references to the Emperor, including all pronouns; and attributing all developments and progress reported in the newspapers to the initiative and foresight of the Emperor and his government.[48]

The political implications of this phenomenon need not concern us here. Whether the monopolization of prestige as well as power by the Emperor may have a primarily beneficial effect, through providing an authoritative symbol that can link the multifarious elements of the Ethiopian state; or whether, as was the case with Bismarck, the elimination of other possible pre-eminent personalities is laying the basis for a leadership vacuum for which the coming generation may pay dearly, is a question that cannot yet be answered. In this context we are concerned only with establishing the point that the ascendance of a cult of personality such as now obtains in Ethiopia eliminates not only the bestowal of public esteem for authentic individual performance, but also deprives the people of exercise in a crucial prerequisite

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of individuality—loyal criticism toward the government, one's friends, and one's self.

Besides the efforts of those courageous Ethiopians who, in exile abroad or living in inner exile at home, have steadfastly worked to develop their powers of integrity and their capacities of independent judgment, there is but one force that holds any promise of increasing the scope of personal autonomy and creativity in Ethiopia, and that is education. The fate of Ethiopia one and two generations hence is linked, more closely than members of large, industrialized societies can readily appreciate, with a single small institution: the Haile Selassie I University. As pinnacle of the country's educational system, it sets the standards, prepares the teachers, and devises many of the innovations to be used throughout the nation's schools. No less important, its relative independence from the national government gives it a certain leeway to pursue policies based primarily on academic considerations. The Ministry of Education, which administers all other secular schools in the country, is necessarily more subjected to the routine pressures of domestic politics. The university, on the other hand, by virtue of its many expatriate staff members and its dependence on outside financial help, is more intimately tied to international academic standards and practices. While a growing number of qualified Ethiopians have joined its staff, for some time to come the University will necessarily be greatly dependent on assistance from academic men from other countries. In any event, it is likely to remain in continuous contact with the outside world by virtue of its participation in the international community of scholars. This condition may give it a degree of autonomy and insulation that can but further the patient development of Ethiopia's most sorely needed asset: cadres of individuals who can resist the facile slogans of the day and work to provide for Ethiopia's great transformation the benefits of enlightened aims and realistic practices.